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THE OPEN SECRET
A MANUAL OF DEVOTION . . .

A BOOK FOR THE TIMES.
BEING A GUIDE TO THE
PRACTICE OF PRAYER

BY

ROBERT F. HORTON

"Exerceatur servus tuus in vitâ tuâ."

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCHES
London: Thomas Law, Memorial Hall, E.C.
1904

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NOTE
TO THE SECOND EDITION

"Not his but God's."

A VERY kindly critic has taken exception to this sentence, as if it implied a claim to inspiration. He thinks I might alter or eliminate it. But, indeed, while I know how full of human weakness and fallibility the composition and writing of the book are, the subject, the plan, and the execution came to me so easily and so distinctly as the answer to daily and hourly prayer, that I should be unfaithful if I did not confess that the Holy Spirit was at work, according to the promise, "They shall be all taught of God." He certainly works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.

R. F. HORTON.

INTRODUCTION

THE object of this book is, to provide for members of the Free Churches some such aids to devotion as are richly offered, and richly used, in the Catholic Church, whether Roman or Anglican. There is nothing in the book to offend Catholics, to whose modes of thought and practices of religion it owes a great debt ; but my purpose has been to avoid those elements of Catholic thought and practice which are a stumbling-block to Free Churchmen. The devotional life is sometimes cast under suspicion by its peculiar association with sacerdotal and monastic ideals. It is my fervent prayer that the Free Churches, believing those ideals to belong rather to legal bondage than to Christian liberty, may yet not sacrifice the standards of prayer which Catholicism has always maintained.

So far from parting company with the

saints and with the devotees of Christendom, whose lives and writings are the common property of all Christians, I venture to claim that this Manual is more Catholic than Catholicism, because it omits those notes of division which make the Roman Church exclusive to all other Churches, and those other notes of division which give to the Anglican Church an aloofness such as Hooker at least would not have approved. The Catholicism of this Manual is that of the one Lord, the one Book, and the one Church; and while its first thought is to bring all Free Churchmen into union at the throne of grace, its ulterior thought is to bring them into vital contact with the whole of Christendom. Men who have met God much in the closet cannot but recognise each other in the world; they have a secret sign and a mutual understanding; in the golden atmosphere of prayer their outlines merge and their hearts unite. It is therefore a great step towards the unity of Christendom when every Christian is induced to lead the devotional life. Our English race is united by the use of the English literature and by the unconscious absorption of the principles and thoughts which have made England great, but the human race can only be united by the use of

that cosmopolitan literature which we call *The Book* or the Bible, and by an absorption into the person and life of Him who for this reason called Himself the Son of Man.

The plan of the book is this: there are seven chapters, one for each day of the week; and each chapter is intended to set the reader's mind moving in a certain direction, so that in the course of each week it may cover the whole meaning and course and practice of Christian devotion. But at the end of each chapter some pages are left vacant, that the reader may inscribe on them from time to time certain names and objects of prayer, and perhaps forms of prayer, which are to be remembered on that particular day. Thus, as time goes on, if the book is used according to its intention, the blank pages will become its most valuable part. As explained in the last chapter, the thing to be desired is that each soul should compose its own manual out of the reading and the prayer and the experience of life. Of course it is not intended that the day's chapter should be read each week, but only that it should be sufficiently known to get its suggestions put into practice; and for this purpose the reader would do well at the beginning to read the book right through.

Now it only remains to mention the providential circumstances under which the book has been written, for I should feel myself wanting in fidelity if I did not acknowledge the Lord's strange dealings with me. Suddenly, in the midst of a crowded and busy life, I was arrested by a failure in my sight; without a moment's warning all the machinery stood still, and I was condemned to a period of inactivity, forbidden to speak in public, to do pastoral work, and even to read or to write. And what made the dispensation the more amazing was, that at the time an accumulation of sorrows, such as I had not before experienced in life, had been piled upon me, so that it seemed as if my sole resource lay in active and absorbing work. When the first stound of the blow was over, I began to ask whether God had in it some design, and gradually the conviction was impressed upon my mind that He had, and that the design primarily was, to set me in such conditions as would make the preparation of this book possible. The selection of those conditions was so remarkable and unforeseen that I could hardly have been more clearly directed if I had heard a voice from heaven saying "Write."

Driven into the central silences, where the

sounds of the world die away, and where the closed senses, by a gentle compulsion, drive the soul into communion with God, I had leisure to reflect on those methods of devotion which I had used for many years in the stress and strain of life, and to subject them, like a sea-battered ship, to the overhauling and the repairs of the dock. They were already tested, and I was able to commend them to others as a ship that has weathered many storms and reached a haven of refuge.

Then I was banished for weeks to a foreign country, and imprisoned in a hospital under injunctions of almost unbroken rest. In daily contact with fellow-sufferers, and feeling around me the life of a German town where men are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, I gained a peculiar experience of the desperate needs of the soul, which never can be satisfied or even comforted except by Him. Then provided, as I am convinced, by the same Hand that was directing all, came quite unexpectedly a friend who was able and willing to read for me the necessary books, and to write at my dictation hour after hour. The soul was left at leisure to meditate and to pray, while other eyes and other hands wrote the book. Nor was the help only that of eye and hand, but warm

sympathy and prayer were given, and that invaluable help which comes from mutual conference on the things of God. How much in this book is due to my fellow-worker it would be impossible to say, but we agreed to ascribe the work not to one another, but to God, who, as we both believe, put it into our hearts and carried it out by the labour of our hands and brain. The book, therefore, goes out to fulfil its mission with a feeling in the author's heart that it is not his, but God's. His own reward has been in the experiences which have led to its production, and the prayer has been constantly rising that many readers may be found to share, if not the experiences, yet the fulness of the blessing.

HAMPSTEAD.
May, 1904.

I

CONCERNING DEVOTION AS A PART OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

THERE are some modern writers, like Auguste Sabatier and Professor Percy Gardner, who place religion entirely in prayer. And, though this may be an exaggeration, the practice of devotion is so large a part of religion, and especially of Christianity, that if we succeeded in adequately treating it, we should find that we had left but few regions of the religious life unvisited. In any case it is very necessary to give continuous thought to the meaning and practice of prayer; for though in its beginnings it is an instinct, in its completeness it is a highly-developed and strenuous life, and, like all the life with which the will is concerned, it must be deliberately undertaken and persistently promoted. It is a tree of the Lord's planting, but He of set purpose leaves the cultivation to us.

Prayer is not so simple as it seems, for when we come to consider, we find that it is composed of at least five acts, some mental, and others emotional. Meditation, which is mental, creates desire, which is emotional; desire prompts petition, which is partly mental and partly an act of the will; petition demands faith, which is mingled of thought and feeling and will; and finally thanksgiving, the great overflow of the heart, completes the act of prayer.

Now it will be seen that our devotion may easily be stunted, and even paralysed, because we have not understood how great and inclusive an act of the soul it is, and must always be. If, for instance, petitions are urged without premeditation, they may be those idle promptings of ill-regulated desire which, in a universe of ordered wisdom, cannot possibly be fulfilled. Or if, again, desire turns Godwards unsupported by faith, the condition is wanting on which a petition can be granted. Or if our prayer is merely a demand of our need, unaccompanied by genuine and fervent thanksgiving, it shows that our meditation has been imperfect; for when the soul has rightly meditated, whatever may be its urgent and crushing needs, it will assuredly find that there is

reason for thanksgiving to go before and after, and for praise to be beneath and above.

"When thou hast thanked thy God for every blessing sent,
What time will then remain for murmur or lament?"

Before considering, then, the times and places, the manner and the subjects, of devotion, we should give some thought to its several parts; and over the door, as it were, of the retreat where prayer is wont to be made, we should write in clear letters which we have duly studied and understood, five words —Meditation, Desire, Petition, Faith, and Thanksgiving.

1. *Meditation.*

The present day is not favourable for meditation, and on that account we need it more. It is the most essential exercise of busy times and of a crowded life; for, while those who live leisurely may, if they will, float on the tranquil waters which are ever moving towards the infinite sea, they who live under pressure may, apart from meditation, fall out of touch with the stream, and spend their strenuous

days in pursuing vanity and arriving nowhere.

I think I may best describe meditation under an image. Many of the astronomical discoveries of recent times have been made by means of photography. A prepared plate is laid in the base of the telescope, and the glass, turned towards the desired point in the heavens, is kept by clockwork in the right position, while the globe on which it rests is steadily revolving. By its own light the heavenly body records itself on this artificial retina, and things which the human eye cannot see are faithfully photographed and opened to leisurely inspection. In the same way the soul can subject itself to the quiet contemplation of heavenly things and adjust its motion to those sublime revolutions of the spheres which, in times of feverish excitement, are forgotten or ignored. God, the soul, the purpose of existence, the proper objects of desire, the wisdom which moves and works in the universe towards the splendid goal, and the means by which our rapid and fitful lives can fulfil their purpose in harmony with the Divine idea, are realities which never can be grasped in hasty glances or by feverish clutches; but by a process which God Himself maintains they quietly

reveal themselves to those who wait upon Him, and record their real though visionary outlines on those who have learned to meditate.

There are two principles recognised in the psychology of to-day which give support to the necessity of meditation. One of these is the fact that the mind exercises a creative control over its own development: by directing thought to certain objects, it brings itself into vital relation with them. What we think, we become. There is nothing more important than the ideas which we admit into the mind or entertain there, because in a very real sense they are never quite transitory, or mere movable furniture, but they remain in a great measure part of the permanent texture. One whose mind is occupied entirely with material things becomes earthly; one whose mind is occupied with eternal things becomes spiritual. And it is clear that the spiritual and eternal things must be more important than the transitory and material. One whose mind is in tune with the infinite will manage the finite well; but one whose mind is only conversant with the finite may bungle even with it, because the controlling ideas and the master forces belong to the infinite alone. "He who has not much

meditated on God, the soul, and the *summum bonum*," said Bishop Berkeley, "may be a thriving earth-worm, but will assuredly be a poor politician and a sorry patriot." For the government of a state, or for the management of a household; for the handling of multitudes or for the direction of oneself; for the conduct of a whole life, or for the living of a single day, it is equally necessary that the mind should be informed and fortified by the steady meditation on spiritual and eternal things. For while it is clear that no one without such exercises can be a saint, it ought to be clear also that no one without such exercises can be even a good and trustworthy man.

St. Paul well understood this principle when he wrote, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. iv. 8). It is rather by preoccupying the mind with good things, than by watching against evil things, that the passions are purged, and the virtuous character is formed, and it is the part of meditation to make

the selection, and to keep the faculties employed about the objects that are truly desirable.

The second fact of psychology which illustrates the necessity of meditation is this, that consciousness at any given time is only partially active, but is for the most part latent. Like an iceberg which rises above the surface of the sea 100 feet for every 400 below, consciousness emerges into activity out of dark and silent depths which are seldom or never completely explored. Mr. Myers has suggested a convenient terminology for expressing this fact; the active part of consciousness he calls the supra-liminal, and the latent part he calls the sub-liminal, consciousness. Which of us has fully considered what is contained in the dark and silent depths of the subliminal consciousness? Or, in other words, who fully realises the things which might at any time start into consciousness, because they are latent, although for the moment they are completely unconscious? That hidden consciousness contains, to begin with, the vast stores of experiences which, from our earliest days, have been quietly falling into it, like the sediment which in primeval seas formed the ocean bed, to be afterwards heaved into light as a stratum of rock.

These numberless and varied experiences, the crowding thoughts, emotions, and impressions which form our life from moment to moment, have settled into the constitution of our personality, and may be, by the activity of memory, brought up again into the light of consciousness. Again, that hidden treasury contains undeveloped faculties which have come to us by heredity. Its walls are covered with inscriptions which possibly we have never read, and yet one day it may be possible to read them. Further, there are in the depths of our being subtle communications like hidden telephones or telegraphs, which connect us with other human beings and with humanity as a whole. In that spacious inner chamber of yourself you may find telepathic messages and mysterious pictures which bring mankind in its entirety within you, and make you yourself the epitome of the whole. But, most mysterious of all, in that inner shrine of your being, there are direct connections with God, and there under the right conditions a communion can be maintained which requires no other proof than the fact that it is, and which is perfectly independent of all outward aids and witnesses. Now the mode of exploring the sub-liminal consciousness which is so rich

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in its contents, so much richer than any of us knows, is meditation. Until with that lamp we have trodden the silent galleries and searched the mystical chambers of our own being, we can know little of what God or man is. The old Roman satirist said,

"Tecum habita, et nôris quam sit tibi curta supellex,"

i.e., "Dwell with thyself and learn how scant thy furniture is"; but it would be more to the point to say, "Dwell with thyself and learn how vast is the inner dwelling and how incalculable its contents."

These few hints at the significance of meditation will suffice to suggest how impossible it must be to pray aright, or even in the strict sense to pray at all, until the mind has brooded on God and the soul and the meaning of life long enough to know what things it should ask for, and to kindle the desires which will impel it to ask.

2. *Desire.*

The human heart is full of restless desires, and the prayers of men consist for the most part of the unsifted petitions which are urged by their varying passions. But nothing can be plainer than this, that prayers can never be answered unless the desires that prompt

them are right. And doubtless the main reason why prayers remain unanswered is that the desires have not been corrected by meditation. When Wordsworth says—

> "Me this unchartered freedom tires,
> I feel the weight of chance desires,"

and appeals to duty to regulate and restrain desire, he reminds us of what we all know, that vain and contradictory desires constitute the burden of life; and that to desire what is right, and to desire it consistently and passionately, is the first condition of true living. The desires can only be corrected by truth. The mind must apprehend God, and then it will say, "There is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee"; it must grasp the thought of the will of God, and then it will passionately desire that its will may be in absolute harmony with His.

It is said that a Russian thief will pray to the icon of one Saint to enable him to steal the jewels from the icon of another. Obviously such a prayer is not real prayer, nor can it be answered by God. Or again, William Carey, apprenticed to a tradesman, fell into temptation, and stole a coin from his master. He fervently prayed to God, and promised that if

he might escape detection he would dedicate his life to God's service. That desire we plainly see was impossible; if it had been granted the great apostle of India might have trodden the path of the criminal and ended his days as a felon. But how many of our chance desires are, if we only knew it, as misguided as these! Some of our most innocent and urgent requests would, if granted, frustrate the counsel of God for us, and divert our feet from the path which His wisdom and love have chosen. We must realise, therefore, that not only are evil desires to be purged, but even harmless desires have to be corrected; for it is true, even in this connection, that the enemy of the best is sometimes the good. And the soul is frequently prevented from seeking the highest ends by an apparently virtuous occupation with a number of unimportant things. The great objects of desire are faint and distant, and, like the starry glories of the midnight sky, they are easily hidden by the useful lamps which light the streets.

But while it is necessary that the desires should be corrected, it is equally necessary that they should be strong and permanent. "We have not, because we ask not," and we ask not because we have forgotten. Our

inconstant mind has shifted, or if desire continues it has changed its object. This is the great infirmity of our mortal condition, that we cannot attain to any steadiness of pursuit. We are now hot, and now cold ; we seek now this, and now that ; we are everything by starts, and nothing long. Even our strongest and most ill-regulated passions do not persist ; satiety follows attainment, and weariness often precedes it. But when we come to consider the proper objects of desires, we must be amazed how weak and how rare our genuine longing for them is.

There are some persons who have hardly felt a thirst for God in twenty years ; there are some who have scarcely entertained the desire for holiness in the course of a lifetime ; there are many who have had the New Testament under their hand and the Christian gospel in their ears from childhood upwards, and yet have never desired to read the one as much as a novel, or to receive the other as much as a letter from a friend. I think it is true to say that if any man were to desire God for one whole hour in the twenty-four he would surely find Him ; if any one for the first day of the week would persistently desire salvation he would be saved ; and if the mind were for one

minute in each hour directed to our Lord Jesus Christ, the life would almost unconsciously be conformed to His image, and the feet would almost habitually be placed in His footprints. But alas! the desire for holy things is so feeble and infrequent that we can hardly remember a whole month in which it has been consistently maintained; nay, we have to reproach ourselves that often in the midst of a prayer the desire has died away like the wind on a summer sea, or been diverted to another direction like a ship that is caught in a squall.

And therefore persistence and importunity are the necessary condition of successful prayer; for how shall God give us what we have ceased to desire before the request is conveyed to heaven? And what must be His thought when, in act to confer the blessing which we have demanded, He finds us already engrossed with some other and trivial matter?

Clearly the aid of the Spirit is needed, not only to teach us what things to ask for, but quite as much to kindle and to sustain within us the desire for them; and it is a sure sign of the Spirit's presence when we can say, "My heart followeth hard after Thee," or "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks

so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." The hunger and thirst after righteousness is the best of conditions, and God is well at work within us when we can say daily and hourly, "Sir, we would see Jesus."

3. *Petition.*

When meditation has conceived the things which we should ask for, and when the in-working of the Spirit has kindled the desire to obtain them, the petitions may be few and simple. A profusion of words is a sign that the centre of prayer is not reached, and vain repetitions are an evidence that faith is wanting. "Let your requests be made known unto God," is a formula that implies that there is no reluctance on God's part to be overcome, that no frantic energy on our part is needed, but that if prayer is prayer at all it will be the trustful statement in a Father's ear of the needs which a Father's heart is ready to supply. The Lord's Prayer is a consummate example of what our petitions should be. No words are wasted, and yet all is said. In the tranquil and unimpeded communion with God, our petitions will be of this nature and in this order: God first, and then the human life; the kingdom of heaven first, and then earthly affairs; the Divine will first, and then our personal wants.

Observe how in these clauses all things are included; the very first word, "Our," expresses the love which binds us one to another, and makes prayers for ourselves intolerable unless those who are dear to us may share them. That little word transforms the very nature of prayer, changing every *me* and *I* of man's morbid egotism into the *us* and *we* of God's holy family. The first request is, that His name should be hallowed, and immediately we have precluded all the vain desires and restless ambitions and earthly passions which would detract from the hallowing of His name. That His kingdom should come, and that His will should be done on earth as it is in heaven, embraces all that the soul can, or ought to, desire. There is the horizon and there is the zenith and the nadir of the sky; whatever details may from time to time be added must be but arcs, lesser or greater, in that "ring of calm and endless light."

Subject to this great proviso, we are then encouraged to make our personal requests, and we are given to understand that nothing is too trivial or insignificant to be brought to our Father. The bread we want for the body, the forgiveness we need for the errors of the day, the guidance in the step that has to be immediately taken, the deliverance from the

evils of all kinds which encompass our path—very little things in the eyes of our fellow-men, but all interesting and important to God—may be mentioned and demanded, wonderful as it seems, along with the kingdom and the power and the glory which are His alone.

4. *Faith.*

The link by which prayer is connected with God is faith. Without that link the prayer will be useless, though it be forged of golden rings. The stateliest liturgy, the most exact and comprehensive petitions, the most orthodox and well-founded expressions of belief, do not lay hold of the throne of God, or even enter into His ear, apart from the faith in the hearts of those that use them. This is the point which the other religions seem not to have grasped ; they supposed that the formula written on a parchment spun round in a prayer-wheel, or droned by a priest's tongue, must of itself have power with God, just as coins purchase the things in the market whether the buyer is thinking of them or not. But Christ changed the whole idea, and made it plain that the prayer as such is nothing, but the heart's trust in the Heavenly Father and confidence in the name of the Son is everything. Adam was but clay until God breathed into

him the breath of life; and the prayer, however noble and beautiful, is but words till the spirit breathes faith into the heart of the suppliant.

The faith which gives efficacy to prayer by linking the desires of man to the potency of God is expounded and elucidated by revelation, and it is well for us to enter into the particulars of it, in order that by knowing its several parts we may exercise it to the full.

It is, in the first place, a conviction that our prayers are not uttered in the void, but enter into a responding intelligence, a conviction that there is an ear which hears, and a heart that sympathises, and a disposition to attend to even the secret movements of the human spirit that desires to pray. And to this is added a conviction that God is expecting our prayers, and is even more eager to elicit our trust than we are to repose it; so that we may conceive Him thrilled with a certain joy when it is said of any human being, "Behold, he prayeth." That is to say, the faith which constitutes prayer credits God with having created men to pray, and with watching for that spontaneous movement of their hearts, as a gardener might watch for the tiny shoots of the seeds that he has sown, or for the ripened fruit of the trees that he has grafted.

In the second place, this faith is a belief

that in prosecution of this great desire in the heart of God, His Son came into the world to give a solid and tangible basis of prayer, and having passed again into the heavens abides as the perpetual intercessor for humanity. Thus, a faith which, to begin with, was an implicit confidence that God is, and is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, becomes in the Christian revelation a surer approach to Him by a new and living way. When in the familiar phrase we speak of praying in the name of Jesus, we touch that development of faith by which aspiration passes to achievement, and yearning desire becomes a demonstrated certainty.

And thus, in the third place, there enters into the idea of faith an element which Christ and Christ alone could impart to it. He carries us to the point that, when we pray as He has directed, we are to believe that we have the things we ask for. Faith is no longer a mere anticipation, but becomes an act of receiving, and the prayer and its answer are regarded as identical.

It will at once be seen how necessary it is for most men to set out in such details the nature of that faith which is an essential constituent of prayer ; for while we loosely speak

of faith, we seldom apprehend how strong and effective a link it is between the needs of men and the love of God. I visited once a mill for the making of the steel wires which are used in the perilous work of mines, and the mill-owner showed me the severe test to which every piece was subjected before it was sent out into the market; a single flaw in a piece would invalidate the whole, and might involve the sacrifice of many lives. The faith by which our prayers and God are knit together must be similarly tested, for many prayers are sustained by so loose and careless a cord that, excellent as they are in their design, and eager as God is to give, they snap asunder under a strain, and there is disappointment not only for man, but also for God. The great command, "Have faith in God," is a call to the careful examination and to the serious strengthening of the steel links of faith.

5. *Thanksgiving.*

To give thanks and to offer praise is an integral part of every genuine prayer; when it is said, "Let your requests be made known with thanksgiving," we must not suppose that this is a garnish which can be added or omitted at pleasure. It is not evident that thanks are to be immediately given for the

assured answer of the request which has just been made; though even this might be justified in the light of Christ's words, "Believe that ye have that which ye ask for"; but it certainly is implied that the reasons for thanksgiving are so numerous and constant that it can never be becoming to make further requests to God without thanking Him for the favours He has shown us, with, or even without, our requests. We have much reason to reproach ourselves for never having given sufficient thanks, and for too frequently forgetting this essential ingredient of our prayers. We are eager to ask for bread if it is withheld, but we forget to thank God for the constant harvests and for the perennial streams. We fall to passionate prayer when disease assails us, or when death threatens, but we are cold in praise of that miracle of providence which maintains our life and secures our health through long unnoted years. We mourn bitterly when our friends are taken from us, but we hardly consider that grace of God which gave them to us and grappled heart to heart with hooks of steel. Yet a great part of our time should have been occupied in the diligent recollection and enumeration of the benefits with which God has been daily loading us; and who can say

how many of our prayers have fallen idly to the ground because they were unaccompanied by gratitude to God for His unceasing goodness to us? A little cloud in our sky excites a loud complaint, and we think nothing of "the wide liberality of blue" which is above and around; we are for a moment, if need be, in manifold afflictions, but we forget that unswerving mercy brought us up to the day of trouble, and that the same mercy will lead us through and out. Whatever there is to pray for, it is certain there is more to praise for, and we can hardly have learnt the secret of recurrent prayer unless we have found the reasons for perpetual praise. To thank God only when our wishes are gratified and when our taste is pleased, is to be still in the infancy of devotion; when we approach maturity we shall thank Him no less heartily when our wishes are crossed, and when gall and wormwood are offered to our taste. And thus George Herbert asked for a heart of equable gratitude—

> "Not thankful when it pleases me,
> As if Thy mercies had spare days,
> But such a heart whose pulse may be
> Thy praise."

We have thus endeavoured to disengage the

several constituents of true devotion in order that we may digest and assimilate the truth, not in a hasty and ill-considered gulp, but in a thoughtful deliberation and a careful employment of each part in succession. It will be found that there is no short way to the life of prayer—hurry is out of place in a matter which is so concerned with eternity; and as we ask what things we should pray for, and how we are to pray, we have reason also to ask that God should keep always before our mind what prayer is.

A Prayer for Sunday Morning.

O my God, grant to me, and to all whom I love, opportunity and serenity to meditate on Thee, to learn what Thou art, and what we are, and what Thou wishest us to be. Give to them and to me right desires, that we may constantly and fervently seek the things which are right in Thine eyes, and lose all desire for such things as are wrong. Enable us to offer up the right petitions in the right order and in the right spirit, that, asking only what Thou canst give, we may be sure that we have the things we ask for. Unite us to Thyself with a living faith, that we may firmly trust Thee, and use with confidence the name and the

intercession of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Bless to-day the preaching and the teaching of Thy gospel, that many may turn unto Thee and live; that Thy truth may go out into all the world, and that all may be built up on their most holy faith; and, if Thou permittest us to enter into Thy house, may we be there as part of the spiritual priesthood offering up to Thee an acceptable sacrifice, singing, and making melody in our hearts. Make us thankful for Thy constant mercies, that praise may be duly mingled with our prayers. To-day we thank Thee that Thou didst call us into being, hast maintained us until now, and givest us the promise of everlasting life. We thank Thee for our reason, for our health, and for our means; we thank Thee for friends, and for those whom we love better than life; we thank Thee for our Church, for Thy Word, and for the gospel; we thank Thee for the gift of the Spirit, and for our salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord. Hear our prayer, and accept our praise, in His name, and for His sake. Amen.

"Sundays the pillars are
On which Heaven's palace archèd lies:
The other days fill up the spare
And hollow room with vanities.
They are the fruitful beds and borders
In God's rich garden: that is bare
Which parts their ranks and orders.

The Sundays of man's life,
Threaded together on Time's string,
Make bracelets to adorn the wife
Of the eternal, glorious King.
On Sunday Heaven's gate stands ope,
Blessings are plentiful and rife,
More plentiful than hope."

GEORGE HERBERT.

II

BOOKS OF DEVOTION

THERE are some books which have established themselves in the usage and devotion of the Church ; and they are numerous and varied enough to make it seem superfluous to increase their number. Literary criticism is in its infancy, and science has immeasurable regions to conquer, but surely, it may be thought, the realm of devotion has been fully explored, and all its parts mapped out by the successive saints of these many Christian centuries. I shall presently propose five of these books as the constant companions of our devotional hours. But while we appraise their value, it will be necessary to point out their limitations. None of them covers the whole ground, and all of them together leave tracts of achievement unattempted, and treasure-stores of spiritual wealth unopened. And we must

be prepared to recognise that though the great works of devotion are for all time, each age requires works of devotion for itself, as each age has its peculiar mental horizon and sympathies or antipathies, which may harden its heart against the forms and notions of the past. If our book of devotion is written in defiance, or even in ignorance, of facts which are now the assured results of science, it is only too likely that an intellectual dissatisfaction may be fatal to spiritual improvement. The reason why the dust gathers on the books of devotion in many libraries is, that on other shelves there are volumes fresh from the press teeming with new discoveries, enlarging our outlook on man and the universe, correcting hoary errors, reducing the vague material of the past to order and distinctness, and giving to the active mind a general impression that all books published ten years ago are already out of date. If, therefore, a manual of devotion is to serve the present time, it may be necessary, as it were, to rewrite it in view of these dazzling achievements of the modern mind.

If, for example, the reader of to-day is searching that treasure of the seventeenth century, *The Saint's Everlasting Rest*, it is

likely that his heart will be chilled and his devotion arrested when he finds Richard Baxter, without apology or demur, repeating the theory that the joys of the redeemed are enhanced by contemplating the torments of the lost. The moral sensitiveness of the twentieth century has shifted the minds of men from the standpoint which the saints of the seventeenth century serenely occupied. Or, again, the sweet and human teaching of the *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, which made Doddridge a light and a power to the eighteenth century, will fail of its effect to-day, not because its essential truths are changed, but simply because we have all unconsciously outgrown the Calvinistic theology, which for Doddridge was still sufficient. Nay, so rapid and inevitable is the shifting of the spiritual atmosphere, that even a devotional work of the nineteenth century may in the twentieth seem more antiquated than Clement or Origen. John Angel James' *Anxious Inquirer*, a book which led our fathers and mothers by hundreds to the feet of Christ, fails to affect their children, because its unquestionable truths are mingled with errors which we have unconsciously outgrown, as a truer understanding of the Biblical literature has advanced hand in hand

with the transfiguring doctrine of evolution.

It will not then be temerity if, in appraising and employing the great books of devotion, we also recognise the limits of their usefulness, and correct them by the growing light and by the quickened religious sense which in the providence of God are the results of advancing time.

The five books which I should recommend to be kept dusted and opened in the place where prayer is wont to be made are these: Thomas à Kempis', *Imitatio Christi;* Lancelot Andrewes' *Private Devotions;* Samuel Rutherford's *Letters;* Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living and Holy Dying*, or at least his *Golden Grove;* and William Law's *Serious Call to a Holy and Devout Life.*

Let us take up these time-honoured works in succession, and try to learn what we may, and what we may not, expect from them.

1. *The Imitation of Christ.*

The work of Thomas à Kempis, though it is called the imitation, might as suitably be described as the assimilation of Christ, for of imitation as the word is now commonly used the writer certainly is not thinking; his whole hope lies in such a direct and supernatural communication of Christ as will

obliterate his sins, succour his infirmities, and make the life within him Christ's rather than his own. The book is indeed a series of intimate passages between Christ and the soul. It is a dialogue, and only the two voices are heard : always there is Christ, inviting and encouraging, wooing and proposing to impart Himself ; always there is the soul protesting its weakness, oppressed with its sins, lamenting its coldness, confident only in self-despair. There are two contrasted forces working through the whole—nature and grace : nature is all darkness, pollution, and sin ; grace is holiness, purity, and light. The soul lies wholly in nature, and grace is stored wholly in Christ ; and the communion of the dialogue is directed to one end, greatly desired by Christ, and too feebly desired by the soul, that nature may be vanquished and swallowed up of grace.

This communion is absolutely secret, and the book is a *journal intime*. The writer has no thought of publication ; no eye but Christ's is to see what is written. The language is perfectly plain without any design of ornament ; the purpose is to set down as simply and swiftly as possible, things, the wonder of which lies wholly in themselves, and not in the language used to express them. When this

private record was found and published, it was the violation of a sacred confidence, but the writer was innocent of it; and doubtless the Lord meant that the conversation should be overheard by all subsequent generations.

This, therefore, is a book of the soul, and as such it must ever be an aid to the soul's life. Sometimes we wonder that an avowed agnostic like George Eliot should delight in it as much as the devout believer; but there is no real ground for wonder: the soul of the agnostic also thirsts for light, and eagerly clutches at anything which can reassure it, and supply that "of which the nerves are scant." As a book of the soul, all souls must desire it, and all souls, if they are wise, will use it.

But now it is well to remember the necessary limitations of the book, in order that we may not commit ourselves to it as to an infallible guide, or be unconsciously confined to its too straitened channel. To begin with, it breathes the atmosphere of the medieval Church; its horizon is not that of the modern world, nor that of the New Testament; it is not entirely free from the materialism which has in other hands turned the mystery of the Communion into a kind of magic. The view of transubstantiation, which to the medieval

mind was justified by the metaphysics of the schoolmen, is as remote from the vital thought of our time as it is from the thought of the apostles. Then, again, the religious standpoint is that of the monastic cell, and never quite transcends it; if the monastic theory is an adequate account of the Christian life, the *Imitatio Christi* may be an adequate manual of Christian devotion. But how can the ascetic spirit be an imitation of Him who came with so genial and hearty a sympathy into human life, that the first thought of all observers was the contrast which He presented to the ascetic Baptist? There is no doubt a sense in which the Christian must retreat to the interior cell, fast from the world, and practise the austerities of a regular devotion and of a constant beneficence, but the distinctive feature of our Lord's religion is, that such a life is to be maintained concurrently with the active duties and the common engagements of humanity. This was expressed in a sentence when the Lord wished His disciples to be "in the world, but not of the world." The ascetic spirit tends inevitably to an opposite conclusion, and monastic communities are in the long run found to be of the world, but not in the world.

And this contraction of the interests to the

life and ideals of the cloister involves the singular anomaly, that while the writer is presumably wishing to imitate Christ, there is nothing that he thinks of less than that which is Christ's most prominent characteristic. Christ is everywhere and always seeking to save men, healing their bodies, instructing their minds, dying as a ransom for their souls. Thomas à Kempis is engaged wholly in saving himself; not only does he never dream of the unvisited nations to whom his Lord despatched His followers as evangelists and missionaries; not only does he say nothing of the miserable creatures that thronged the medieval city, pined in its dungeons, or suffered in its lazarettos; but we do not find him concerned even with the salvation of his brother monks, or indeed making it any part of his religion to save the world for which Christ died. It is, therefore, from the *Imitatio Christi*, as, next to the Bible, the most widely-known Christian book, that many like George Eliot have fallen into the error, that Christianity is a form of spiritual selfishness, and other-worldliness. That charge lies justly against Thomas à Kempis, but not against Christ, whose inner thought was expressed in the saying, "He that loseth his life (or his soul) shall save it." It will be

seen, then, that the *Imitatio* must be used and not abused; it must not be mistaken for a full-orbed account of Christian truth, of Christian life, or of Christian devotion. It turns an intense light upon one point and one point alone, namely, that personal communion with Christ which is the spring of all vital Christianity; but it does not succeed in showing the results which flow from such a communion, because the writer is hampered and blinded by his surroundings. He has no complete knowledge of Scripture, and no knowledge of the world at all. He is weighed down by the superstitions, the corruptions, and the accretions which have encumbered the Church; and while he has personally made his way into the presence of Christ, he has not been able to divest himself of the encumbrances, or to see the world and human life with Christ's eyes, and as we wish to see them.

2. *Bishop Andrewes' Private Devotions.*

In the reign of James I., while Shakespeare was producing his greatest plays, and Bacon was meditating the *Novum Organum*, and the authorised version of the English Bible, in which Lancelot Andrewes, as the greatest linguist of his age, had a considerable part, was permeating and revolutionising the

country, a book of devotion was being secretly compiled which is worthy to lie side by side with the *Imitatio Christi.* In one respect the two works resemble each other; Bishop Andrewes, like Thomas à Kempis, wrote without a thought of any other reader than God. Not only had he no intention of publishing those secrets of his soul, but he wrote them for the most part in Greek—not, I think, so much because that incomparable language supplies a richer vocabulary than his own, but rather because he would keep his secret from casual eyes, and the language, though familiar to him, was a cypher to domestics or attendants. In the private devotions we have again a revelation of the innermost soul. Here a man lays himself bare to God; there is no subterfuge, no apology, no glorying, no posturing, no affectation of emotion. Written out in the briefest form is the intercourse between a man and his God—a man who spent as much as five hours a day in prayer, his God who could never be sufficiently entreated or praised. If the *Imitatio* represents the intensity of devotion, Andrewes' prayers represent its extension. His peculiarity as a man of prayer is, that he covers the whole field. He draws up a scheme for each day of the week, and not-

withstanding the brevity of expression nothing could exceed the copiousness of the prayer. Each day begins with a meditation on the Creator and His works, and the week follows the suggestions of the first chapter of Genesis. The imagination is extended and the heart is kindled by a particular rehearsal of the manifold works of God. From this exordium he passes on to a pitiful prayer for grace; then he enters into heartbreaking confessions of sin, from which he rises up to a prolonged act of intercession; finally he breaks into detailed and fervent thanksgiving. From the fact that the prayer is thus composed in five parts, and that he gave five hours a day to prayer, we cannot but infer that he allotted an hour to each part. To any one who has only a common notion of hasty and unelaborated prayer, it must be a revelation to enter into the closet with Lancelot Andrewes, to contemplate this spacious scheme, and to grasp the idea of devotions which cover the whole universe of existence, make demands on all faculties of the soul, and occupy at least a third of the waking hours.

Not content with these exercises of every day, Andrewes has much longer exercises allotted to particular parts of devotion, such

as repentance, intercession, or thanksgiving. The soul is stretched in all directions to train all the capacities of prayer; the lungs are inflated, and not a muscle is left undeveloped. But what gives its peculiar character to this unique manual of devotion, is the poignancy of the confession of sin and of the pleas for pardon. These are not the periods of a musically chanted litany, which an easy congregation will sing with conscience unstirred; they are the secret cries of the soul, when there is none but God to hear, and those inner declensions of the heart which a fellow-man seldom suspects.

As Bishop, successively of Chichester, Ely, and Winchester, and as a courtier in the stupid and ridiculous court of James I., Lancelot Andrewes was betrayed into compliances and compromises, to which a scholar would be peculiarly liable, who, after spending the best years of his life with books, was brought out into the stir and glitter of the fashionable world. George Herbert consoled himself in missing preferment by the question:

"How know I if Thou should'st me raise
That I should thus raise Thee?
Perhaps great places and Thy praise
Do not so well agree."

Lancelot Andrewes had the bitter experience of finding that as a bishop he was implicated in the crimes and follies of his sovereign, whose sapient axiom was "No bishop, no king." His conscience never ceased to torment him; he reproached himself that he could never sufficiently weep or repent; "Open in me the fountain of tears, give me a molten heart," was his perpetual cry. This passionate penitence makes the *Devotions* a peculiarly valuable discipline of the soul, and all the more so because to all appearance Andrewes was singularly blameless. If he had reason to cry "I am made of sin," there is none of us who must not repeatedly inquire, and pray to be searched, in order to be cleansed from secret faults. But if the stress laid on penitence is valuable, the space given to intercession is still more instructive, and here we mark the advance beyond the monastic limitations of Thomas à Kempis. To intercede is to share our Saviour's devotions; it is the most exalted and least remembered part of prayer. Andrewes is incredibly ingenious in enumerating the objects of intercession: all sorts and conditions of men are particularly remembered; all kinds of benefits and graces are particularly sought. It is in these parts

of the *Devotions* that the spirit seems most modern, and the "cloudless, boundless, human view" in the office of prayer marks him as the worthy contemporary of Shakespeare and Bacon.

But it is necessary even with this treasure in our hands to recognise that it is not perfect, and to admit that it cannot be serviceable to all. The very fulness of the scheme may discourage the simple or the busy. It may be like Saul's armour to David, when a few stones from the brook and a shepherd's sling might be more effectual. Not every one can pray five hours a day; and though our Lord would pray all night, He did not enjoin such lengthy exercises on His disciples. We can even conceive that the Father's heart might sometimes be better pleased with the artless talk or with the restful silence of His children than with the multitude of thoughts and words.

And even the sincerity and fulness of penitence may not be the last word upon the relation between the sinner and the Saviour. We are tempted to ask, was Andrewes never forgiven? was there no sacrifice for sin? was there no Holy Spirit sealing the pardon, and assuring of reconciliation? was there no happy confidence in the Father's house, when

the festive garment was produced, and the ring was put on the finger, and the fatted calf was killed? If this self-torturing sinner was forgiven, and God had put away his sins "far as the east is from the west," was it the supreme act of faith and love to be in unending contrition and confession, as if we were pardoned for the magnitude of our repentance, instead of by the grace of Divine love, or, as if our sins were washed away by our tears rather than by the blood of Christ? The joyful note of the evangelical revival had not sounded, Doddridge had not sung "O happy day that fixed my choice," and Wesley had not led the Church into the apostolic truth of a full assurance. Though Bishop Andrewes has a complete knowledge of the Scriptures, a veil remains over his eyes in reading some of the brightest parts, and we should misuse rather than use his book if we did not suffer that veil to be taken away in Christ.

3. *Samuel Rutherford's Letters.*

In 1627, the year after Lancelot Andrewes died, Samuel Rutherford entered on his ministry at Anwoth, a scattered hamlet by the Solway Firth. From the first he could hardly give sleep to his eyes in his concern for the souls, gentle and simple, committed to

his care; and from that year 1627 he began to write those letters, extending almost to the day of his death in 1661, which constitute one of our most priceless aids to devotion. Three hundred and sixty-five letters, one for each day of the year, have been preserved; and any one who should mark each day by reading and pondering one of these letters must assuredly make progress in the life which is hidden with Christ in God.

The letters are addressed to various correspondents, and they deal occasionally with the circumstances of the moment; they are rich in comfort to those who were bereaved or persecuted, and they betray always a fervent desire to bring the souls of the recipients "to a fair union with Christ." But, strictly speaking, Christ Himself is Rutherford's sole correspondent; his characteristic opening is, "My love in Christ Jesus remembered," and his signature is, "Yours in his sweet Lord Jesus, S. R." The letter in almost every case is a sustained chant in praise of Christ. As in the letters of St. Paul, that name appears not only on every page, but almost in every sentence. Saturated as he is with Scripture language, and with the writings of the apostle, he yet never echoes the thought or feeling of others; everything is quite original,

derived from a fresh personal experience and expressed in a form which stands by itself in literature. The writer's mind is essentially poetical; imagery and illustrations crowd in upon it in rapid succession, and the phrases and words are so striking and beautiful, that the student of English literature can hardly be said to know the resources of our language if he is ignorant of Rutherford's letters. All this wealth of imagery and of expression is brought in contribution to the praise of Christ. Like the three Magi from the East, he makes an offering, though in his case it is perpetual, of gold and frankincense and myrrh. The cold page is all aglow, the quaint Scot's language is burnished and flashing, and the incrusted gems sparkle with celestial light.

No portrait of Rutherford has survived, nor have we any description of him, except that "he was a little, fair man," with a shrill and untunable voice; but in his letters he stands revealed, his lineaments are perfectly distinct, and his self-delineation may be given in familiar words, "it is not I that live, but Christ that liveth in me."

"This is a poet whose music reacheth men,
Though he himself is hardly seen at all."

Nor do we fully apprehend the significance of this absorption in Christ until we trace the changing circumstances of the eventful years over which these letters are spread. The young minister at Anwoth for nine years was occupied with Christ, rising at three in the morning to begin communion with Him, pacing the woodland path on the hill above the manse, to fill his soul with Him, visiting his scattered flock to speak a word for Him, preaching Him with transports of ecstasy which seemed at times to lift him out of the pulpit, and writing in his letters the rich and ever-new discoveries that he has made of Him from day to day. But in 1636 he was suspended from this blissful ministry by the Bishop of Wigton, and sent into silence and confinement, in the episcopal and Catholic city of Aberdeen. Under these changed circumstances his passion for Christ rose to higher raptures. Was he a prisoner for Christ? Nay, he was rather Christ's prisoner, and shut up with his dearest Lord.

The letters burn with zeal for his harassed Church, and by the letters he maintains his pastoral work in his deserted Anwoth. When the episcopal domination was for a moment over, and the Puritan régime began, Rutherford immediately took his place in the

first rank of Presbyterian leaders. He was sent to London for the Westminster Assembly, and between 1644 and 1647 he was occupied there in framing the Confession ; the Shorter Catechism in its final form adhered closely to his MS. draft, which still exists. In this new condition of activity and influence his one thought was Christ, and the tone of the letters is unchanged ; the ecclesiastical statesman, like the minister of Anwoth, and the prisoner of hope at Aberdeen, is only a human soul laden with Christ and absorbed in Him. Then followed the years in which he was Principal of the College at St. Andrews, the leader of a dominant party, and the chosen teacher of Charles II., whom the Scots strangely preferred to Cromwell. Foreign Universities invited him to Theological Chairs, and for twelve or thirteen years he seemed to live in the smile of the world. But this fortune did not change him in the least ; still his one thought was Christ; the letters deliberately exclude the false and transient gleams of earthly comfort, and shine only with the same Lord, who had been his light in cloudy and dark days. With the Restoration in 1660 the Presbyterian author of *Lex Rex* became again suspect; the Royal Courts summoned him from St. Andrews to stand his trial ; but, as

he put it, he had received a prior summons, and was called to "that country where few kings and great persons come." With unabated joy, and glorying in Christ, with those memorable words on his lips, "Glory, glory dwelleth in Immanuel's land," he went home, leaving to Scotland one of her most honoured names, and to the Church of Christ those inimitable letters.

It seems almost unnecessary to point out limitations of this unique book of devotion, for obviously it must suffer the disadvantages involved in the fact that it is not a book at all, but a collection of letters extending over half a lifetime. But even making due allowance for this, we shall still do well to recognise the defects of the work, so that we may not mar its influence by exaggerating its merits. We must not here expect any detailed theological teaching, nor any deliberate analysis of the religious life; the Holy Spirit is seldom mentioned in the letters, and though the Spirit's influence is nowhere more felt than in this transcendent praise of Christ, we cannot here obtain that doctrine of the Holy Spirit on which the life of sustained devotion depends. Nor must we expect that extensive contemplation of the nature and works of God which

we find in the devotions of Andrewes. If God in Christ is delineated with extraordinary force and fulness, it must be owned that Rutherford's letters give us but few glimpses of God in any other capacity.

And further, to avoid a possible disappointment and discouragement, let us recognise that there are certain minds, and those not the least devotional, to which the rhapsodical style of Rutherford makes no appeal. To them there will seem to be an extravagance of emotion and a licence of familiarity with the Divine person which border on irreverence. Indeed, some critics not wholly unsympathetic have judged the letters to be on the very frontier of insanity. Those who are conscious of such a misgiving in reading Rutherford may be content to leave him aside, and to take refuge in the cool cogency of William Law.

4. Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living and Holy Dying.*

We are now dealing with a book which is a great English classic. Perhaps no writer of English is possessed of so copious and even exuberant an eloquence as Jeremy Taylor. Certainly we must come to John Ruskin in the nineteenth century before we find the same flexibility and inexhaustible discursive-

ness in the use of our language. It is a striking thought, that the greatest master of the language is also the greatest teacher of devotion. Many who are not attracted by religious books must have been led to read the *Holy Living and Holy Dying* by the mere interest of the style, and it is to be hoped that having begun they will finish the book; for such is Taylor's fertility that it improves as it goes on; and the Holy Dying is even richer in illustration, allusion, and quotation, and more brilliant in its masterly flow of language, than the earlier part of the book.

Perhaps it is hardly correct to describe this great classic as a manual of devotion. It moves to, and aids in, devotion, and the spirit of devotion breathes in every page. But the scope of the book is wider; the purpose is to map out all the parts of good living, and then to describe by what methods a life which has been devoutly lived may be hopefully closed. What the *Ethics* of Aristotle did for the Greeks, Jeremy Taylor's book does for the English. He covers the same ground as the ancient philosopher, and illustrates the amazing changes which the revelation of Christianity has made in the ideal of human conduct. First of all, he expounds the

moving causes which will induce a devout life; he discusses the sanctity of time as only he can who has gained the conception of Eternity; then he dwells on the purity of intention, which in the school of Christ fixes the value of conduct; then he expounds the practice of the presence of God, which gives to human life its sacredness, and to holy living its motive and power.

The treatise then passes on to deal in the Christian spirit with two of the old cardinal virtues—sobriety or temperance, and justice; and it is in this part that the comparison with Aristotle is most suggestive. Then in place of the two other cardinal virtues he introduces what have been called the Evangelic virtues, and urges the meaning of faith, hope, and charity. From this starting-point he deals with the duties and practices of the Christian life—prayer, study of the Bible and of other good books, worship, almsgiving, and so on, culminating in Holy Communion.

In the *Holy Dying* he proceeds, in a systematic way, to take the sting from death by exhibiting the brevity and uncertainty of life; he shows how a Christian should accept disease, and employ the sick bed, as a preparation for heaven. And he leads the soul beforehand through all those exercises

and considerations which tend to make the momentous change of death an object rather of desire than of dread.

The whole book not only furnishes incentives to devotion, and directions for its practice, but is interspersed with innumerable prayers, which are themselves a training in the life of communion with God. The *Holy Living and Holy Dying* is, then, a treatise on the conduct of life, even more than a manual of devotion; it is to be read and studied, rather than employed in daily prayer, like the *Imitatio* or Lancelot Andrewes.

But even so, the modern mind is apt to rebel against the length and elaboration of the treatment. As the necessary virtues are enumerated, as the motives for them are multiplied, as the various instances are distinguished, and as the discursive comments on them are offered, the question will sometimes present itself, whether this kind of analysis is not better adapted for examining virtues which are dead, than for bringing virtue to life. Is not this, we are inclined to ask, the reproduction of the Mosaic law in a Christian guise? Is not the memory, taxed with the innumerable particulars of virtue, rendered anxious lest

it should let any of them slip, and fatigued with a sense of impossibility in ever meeting the requirements of so complicated a system? And the further doubt suggests itself: when the holy living and holy dying are so elaborated, we do not feel sure that everything, or even the most important thing, is included. Suppose the most important thing even in the devotional life is to forget oneself, and to pour out all one's powers in the passionate efforts to save the world; suppose the height of devotion should be so eager a love to men, that the heart forgets even to ask whether it loves at all. When Wilberforce was reproached [1] by a friend of an older school, with the question whether, in his eager struggle for the freedom of the slaves, he was not neglecting his own soul, he answered in surprise, "Madam, I had forgotten that I had a soul!" Suppose that such a forgetfulness was the unconscious illustration of the Master's words, "He that loseth his soul shall find it." Suppose, in short, that the way to holy living is not by the path of

[1] Mr. Edmond Gosse, in his Life of Jeremy Taylor, observes, though he excuses, the curious fact that Jeremy Taylor is never conscious of the poor, but writes as if he had in view only the upper classes.

introspection, nor even by the path of self-cultivation, but rather by the path of the Cross, and of a passion which comes, like the breath of spring, from the heart of God, and in the surprise of a new birth transforms the soul; then it must be owned that with all its careful analysis, and with all its Divine instruction, and with all its quickening influence, the *Holy Living and Holy Dying* still omits one thing which is needful, and, unless that one thing needful is gained elsewhere, Jeremy Taylor's great classic may leave the soul stumbling along in the weary path of a Christian legalism.

5. William Law's *Serious Call.*

The *Serious Call* has its spiritual trophies, and not only, as we may hope, in the past. It fed the piety of Samuel Johnson, and to it John Wesley owed the impulse to his earlier life of devotion. And indeed it is a memorable book; it belongs to the golden age of eighteenth-century literature, and is written in the English which Addison, Steele, Berkeley, and Fielding had polished, before Gibbon and Johnson had carried the polish to the point of artificiality. Again we have the remarkable fact, that a great book of devotion is written by a great master of style. William Law was a Nonjuror, and driven

from the active work of the Church he spent his long and blameless years in retirement at Kingscliffe, in Northamptonshire. He passed his days in study and in prayer, and in a profuse almsgiving which, it is painful to confess, tainted the neighbourhood with a demoralised pauperism. The *Serious Call* is a plea for such a life of devotion as he himself lived,

> "For first he wrought,
> And afterwards he taught."

He divided his day into punctual watches of prayer; every three hours he heard the silent bell summoning him to the closet. At six in the morning came the first office, the dedication of himself and of the day; at nine he was on his knees pleading for humility; at noon he was asking for love and interceding for the world; at three o'clock he was with Christ on the Cross, surrendering his spirit into the Father's hands; at six he brought the day, its acts and its thoughts, into review; lastly, before he slept he meditated on that death of which sleep is the figure, and used the incentive of approaching unconsciousness to make an absolute surrender of himself to God. And it should be remembered that the

life so spent had an end corresponding to its course; at the age of seventy-five he died "in full vigour of mind, and in a rapture of joy, singing the Angels' hymn."

This life he commended to the whole world in the *Serious Call.* So lucid is the language, and so convincing is the argument, that the reader seems shut up to the conclusion, that only the devotional life is worth living. "Come now and let us reason together," Law seems to say, "laying aside all enthusiasm, and all excitement of the passions, I will demonstrate to you, by the force of facts, and by the clearest processes of logic, that to live any other kind of life is the height of absurdity." The argument is relieved and enforced by a literary device which the early eighteenth-century writers had introduced. Under the guise of significant Latin names, typical portraits are drawn to illustrate in the concrete the various virtues and vices. These character-sketches are so pointed and witty, that it is plain, if he had desired it, he might have rivalled Fielding as a novelist, or Goldsmith as a dramatist. Nothing could be more humorous, for example, than the pictures of Flavia, the woman of the world, and of Succus, the man who lives merely to eat and to sleep. And

nothing could be more exquisite, finer in delineation, or richer in colour, than the portraits of Miranda and Eusebia, the two finished instances of Christian womanhood.

It might be thought that no word of criticism need be passed on this immortal book, and that no deduction need be made from its varied perfections. But we have to remember the curious fact, that not only did John Wesley outgrow the book when he came into contact with Böhler, and discovered the secrets of spiritual power, but Law himself left his book behind when, by the reading of Behmen, he entered into the more mystical apprehension of the spiritual life. The later works, such as the *Spirit of Love* and the *Spirit of Prayer*, show that he had transcended the limits of his own discipline; he had, if we may say so, like his disciple Wesley, passed through the rigour of Methodism into the liberty and the fulness of the sonship of God. The *Serious Call* is but a stage, a necessary and invaluable stage, but yet only a stage in the progress of the Christian life. The Lord has greater things, far greater, to show His own, though He will withhold them until the soul has taken upon itself that yoke, and has en-

deavoured to live in the spirit of that exacting discipline.

Let it not therefore be a scandal if sometimes Law seems to imply that piety and devotion are the purchase-money of our salvation, and that the gospel of grace is sliding back into the gospel of law. Before Christ comes eating and drinking, the forerunner comes into the desert fed on locusts and wild honey ; and even Christ Himself is in the wilderness, with the wild beasts, and fasting for many days, before He joins the festivity of the marriage in Cana of Galilee. The soul of man cannot soar till it has learnt to climb, and though the free heavens invite it to fly, it cannot fly till it has wings. And this cannot be too earnestly considered, that all the spiritual raptures of God's saints do not produce, but follow, the rigorous and prolonged training, the days of seeking, the wrestling of prayer, the misgivings and the fears, the trembling aspirations of hope which bear rather the colour of despair. The promised land which is entered without a journey through the wilderness is, if the experience of holy souls may be trusted, illusory or evanescent ; and though the soul naturally yearns for the promised land, and seems to see its pastures, and its rivers, and

its mountain-ranges in certain revelations of the sunset or the dawn, it must not be deluded by the hope that the land can actually be reached without the passage of the Red Sea, and some sojourning under the cliffs of Sinai, without the weary marches of the desert, and the fears in the swelling of Jordan.

A Prayer on Entering the Closet.

My God and my Father, I thank Thee for those who have trodden this path before me, and for the memorials which they have left to guide and to hearten me. Grant me grace to fix my wandering thought on those who have now attained the promises, rather than on the many who do not seek them; help me to follow them as they have followed Christ, and to be reckoned, although the least and humblest, among their number. Forgive past failures, the coldness of my zeal, and the faintness of my prayer, the broken resolution and the foolish wanderings of my purposes; save me from despair, and encourage me to begin again with a new hope. Father, glorify Thy name and extend Thy kingdom; bring men to Thyself, and deepen Thy work in Thy Church as Thou extendest it in the world; give to me

a constant desire to save some, and make me, if it be possible, a fisher of men. And now, since there is but one desirable company in heaven and upon earth, the noble living and the noble dead, let me join them in praising and blessing Thee. We worship and adore Thee, we prostrate ourselves at Thy feet; let all that is within us bless Thy holy name. With joy we draw water out of the wells of salvation, with gratitude we accept the sweet gift of the Holy Spirit through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

III

THE BOOK OF DEVOTION

IT has frequently been observed that Protestantism is less prolific in devotional literature than the Roman Church ; but the explanation of this difference, though very obvious, is not always remembered ; to Protestantism the Bible is the supreme and sufficient book of devotion. The Roman Church has not, since the earliest times encouraged her children to use the Bible in this way. Conscious of the difficulties in understanding the book, and, perhaps, as the centuries advanced, conscious of the divergence of her teaching and practice from the rule of Scripture, she has taken the Bible into her own keeping, and administered it to the people under her own direction. Thus withholding the one book of devotion, her theologians and saints have endeavoured to fill the gap with a constant stream of devo-

tional literature; and the invention of strange forms and instruments of devotion has become one of the distinguishing features of Roman Christianity.

Protestantism, on the other hand, re-discovered the Bible, learnt to use it in a new way, and found in it all and even more than Catholics find in their scapularies, and devotion of the Sacred Heart and the like. This is the more remarkable because the book does not on the surface appear or profess to be a manual of devotion at all, and the Roman theologians are no doubt right in recognising that the proper use of the Bible is a secret to be discovered, or a mystery to be learned. Where they seem to us to be wrong, is in not perceiving that the secret is an open one, and that the mystery is discovered by the habitual use of the book; and indeed the discipline of the discovery is so rare a training of mind and spirit, that it is perhaps the main distinction between Catholic and Protestant countries, that, while Catholic devotion is nourished by forms and beliefs, prepared and imparted by authority, Protestant devotion is, owing to the very nature of its principal manual, sustained by the keen intellectual effort to interpret and understand the Scriptures, and nourished by the spiritual

fruits which are gained as the result of such assiduous toil. An easy book of devotion is not really an advantage ; it is like the railway up a lofty mountain, which robs the ascent of its toil, but robs the climber also of the strengthened thews, of the invigorated lungs, and of the eager relish, which give to the prospect on the summit more than half its charm. Our Lord spoke to the people in parables, that by their effort to understand they might the better receive what He taught ; and God speaks to men, and would have them speak to Him, in a collected literature, which from first to last is something of a parable, demanding a diligent study to comprehend it, in order that the truth comprehended may be the more heartily received.

Now if we are to use the Bible as a manual of devotion, the first thing to recognise is, that it, like a Hebrew book, begins not at the beginning, but at the end. All the mistakes of Biblical interpretation are due more or less to not observing that the Bible is the tree of life, and, like a tree, it is to be approached and used for the foliage that overshadows, and for the fruits which it bears, not for the trunk which sustains it, or for the fibrous fingers with which its roots ramify and clutch the soil beneath. It might

seem hardly necessary to insist on this, which is clear as the day directly it is pointed out; but the neglect of this point is so serious and so common, that it cannot be too frequently emphasised. The fruit of the tree is our Lord Jesus Christ, or, to speak more exactly, that gift and working of the Holy Spirit by which Christ is received into the soul, and made the promise and the power of eternal life. This tree was planted in Eden, and nurtured to maturity expressly to bear this fruit. When this fruit is ripe the tree has accomplished its purpose; if it fails to bear this fruit, it is, like the barren fig-tree, fit only to wither away and to be burned. The very first thing therefore which a man has to do with the Bible is to find Christ there, to receive Him as the Bread of Life, and by the Holy Spirit's work, which attends all real belief in Christ, to be born into newness of life. Let the reader pause for a moment and put the question, Have I taken this fruit and eaten it for myself; have I found Christ the propitiation for my sins, the pardon of God, the reconciliation with my Father, the manna on which the soul can feed, the living water which quenches my thirst, and which springs up within me as a fountain that flows forth? Let the reader, I say, put this question, and

pause until he can answer it; if it is doubtful, let him reach out his hand, and now for the first time pluck that fruit which is for his healing, and for the healing of the nations; let him, as his eye rests on this page, receive the gift of God by simple faith, and, believing that Christ is now his Saviour, feed on Him in his heart and be thankful.

This personal acceptance of Christ, which He Himself describes as the birth of water and of the Spirit, is the true Conversion; and the great hindrance to spiritual progress in Christendom is, that the Church has constantly whittled away the meaning of the term, and taught that regeneration is something short of an actual experience, or that conversion is unnecessary for those who have conformed to the rites and practices of the Church. Whitefield and Wesley transformed England by giving to conversion once more its proper value; and, reader, let me tell you plainly, you can make no progress "except you are converted." It is a truth which does not change with the progress of time or the fluctuations of thought, a truth which is brought down to us out of a sphere in which there is no "changeableness, nor a shadow that is cast by turning"; that "which is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the

Spirit is Spirit." Let not the blundering and short-sighted philosophies of the time hide from your eyes that the spiritual is the real that only as you come into possession of the Spirit can you come into permanent existence, and that therefore it is the most vital of all questions, the one which must be settled before it is worth while to discuss or to raise any other, Am I born again of the Spirit?

Now it is the teaching of the New Testament, that the Spirit leads the soul into all truth, and that he that is spiritual discerns all things. Accordingly the spiritual man, and he alone, can understand the Scriptures; their object is to bring the man to Christ, but when he has come to Christ, Christ opens his eyes and, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, expounds to him the things concerning Himself." What is a man likely to make of Moses and the Pentateuch without Christ and the Spirit as interpreters? He will be no more than a Jew caught in the meshes of the law, ignorant of eternal life. Or what can he do with the annals of Israel unless the spirit of Christ can interpret them? He will find only a story of decadence from the golden age of David to the pitiable captivity of Zechariah; a tale of miserable decline from the glory of the Law given on Sinai, to the

painful and diminished restoration among the returning exiles. Or what can he make of the prophets unless Christ is there to justify them? Dense obscurity, lit by occasional gleams of moral truth and poetical beauty; terrific denunciations of sin and rebellion, with threats of calamity and punishment far exceeding the promises of hope; a tangle of allusions and situations which are only doubtfully explained, an issue which is futile or even meaningless unless Christ had come; these are the characteristics of that prophetic literature which derives all its value from its realisation in Christianity. Or what can he make of the Psalms or of the Wisdom books apart from Christ? He is perplexed by the crudest morality, mingling with lofty aspirations and tender devotions; and whenever he is about to surrender himself to some current of spiritual feeling, or some enthusiasm of righteousness, he is brought suddenly up by a bewildering contradiction, by some moral insensibility, or some lower application which leaves his soul chilled or even repelled.

These difficulties are dissolved, or at least sensibly diminished, directly we observe that the production of the new birth by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ is the fruit for which the Bible grew. It is no argument against the

wrinkled twigs, the gnarled trunk, and the fibrous roots, that they have not the flavour, the pulp, or the odour of the fruit; it is enough that the sap is drawn from the roots, through the secret ducts of bole and bough, to swell the fruit to its perfection. It is a miracle that the tender leaf uncurls, that the blossom unfolds, and that the fruit is formed, for what have these to do with the tough wood and the rough bark, and the roots that cling to the soil? But who thinks of criticising the earthy matter, which, by the mysterious organic power, builds up the solid stem, and spreads the network of branches to support the covert of palpitating leaves in the air, and to hang among them the fruits golden or red? And in the same way, the reality of the Christian experience is not discredited because its idea was formed in the obscure beginnings of history and religion, or because its sap was drawn through fibres which mingled with the soil, through the rough texture of a historic growth and the ramifications of a diverse human experience. The difficulties which are felt by the careless reader of the Bible cease to trouble the spiritual mind which has understood the organic growth of religion. The obscure tragedies, for example, which stain the pages of the book of Judges—terrible enough,

it must be confessed, if they are regarded as examples for our imitation or expressions of our moral ideas—are full of interest and instruction, when they are recognised as the subterranean roots of a tree which would one day bear the fruit of Christianity, and when, amid all the crudity and the darkness of these beginnings, is discerned the vital sap which can rise to such an issue. Or again, the terrible execrations in the book of Psalms appear only as the roughness of the bark which contains religious ideas, imperfect it may be, but yet throbbing with life, and destined to evolve into perfection. Nor do the crabbed and involved passages of the prophets, their doubtful historical allusions, or their tendencies to excessive denunciation, trouble the mind which has found the clue; for the wonder of the prophets is this, that in the uncertainties and confusions of a political situation, and surrounded by the materialism of a degraded religious cultus, they are yet always impelled towards the idea of a state and of a king such as eye has never seen; they are always throbbing with a sense of righteousness which men have never realised, and they are always straining towards a spirituality of religion for which as yet the very language had not been invented.

But as the clue to the understanding of Scripture is thus taken into the hand of the believer in Christ, the use of the book as a manual of devotion begins to appear. It may not be possible to follow in detail the methods by which the Bible, thus understood, becomes the light of the closet and the unfailing means of communion between the soul and God; but one or two suggestions may be made, which will lead the reader to discover for himself the inexhaustible richness of the treasure which is in his hands. And again, be it remembered, that it is only by a personal inquiry that the secret of the Bible can ever be found. "He that asks receives, he that seeks finds, and to him that knocks it is opened."

1. *A chapter a day.*

Always provided that you take Christ with you as guide and interpreter, you may make a habit of reading through the Bible as it stands, a chapter a day, from beginning to end. It will take in this way about two years and three-quarters, and the journey, therefore, cannot be accomplished more than twenty times or so, before your days are ended and the open vision begins. Each time you traverse the track, as it becomes more familiar, you will be more

impressed with the compelling force of the morning chapter to bring you to your knees. But it will be said, Surely there are some chapters in the Bible, dreary lists, many unedifying stories, dark outbreaks of passion or despair, which can furnish no incentive to devotion, and no objects for which to pray. Such chapters diminish in number with each repetition of the journey; after some experience in the thorniest thicket you will be surprised by a burning bush, and in the arid desert a table will suddenly be spread with meat, on which you may go for many days and nights. The reader might smile at what seems the exaggeration of saying that a genealogical list in the book of Chronicles can be a means of grace, but has he forgotten that Christ has come with him into that silent record of the past; does he not remember that Christ is the Son of Man, and that all the generations of mankind that have been, and that are to be, are the parts of a body, of which Christ is the Head? How do these indistinguishable names appear in the light of this glowing truth? what portion of humanity can be indifferent or alien? To one who is in Christ, the names of the forgotten dead are reminders that Christ has not forgotten them, and no chapter in the Bible can be more solemn

and inspiring than one in which, with Christ beside us, we survey, as it were, the scattered bones, and remember how His word can bid them live. This is the very quality and substance of Scripture, that by virtue of Christ and His Spirit, the uncomely parts acquire comeliness, and to some of the things that are contemned we learn to give the more abundant honour. I do not know any chapter in the Bible which, when taken in the regular order of such a daily reading, does not contain suggestions of prayer, and inducements to realise more fully the possibilities of the soul. If we are detained for some days in the minute regulations of Leviticus, we still have the interpretation which Christ's presence affords, and may, with Him in the heart, be well pleased to linger over the law which was the schoolmaster to bring men to Him, and to rejoice that He is the fulfilment of the types, and the end of the law to every one that believeth. And for the comparative drouth of Leviticus, we are presently rewarded by the stirring narratives which are embedded in Numbers, and by that land of fruitfulness and flowing streams, the book of Deuteronomy. And if the last chapters of Ezekiel, owing chiefly to a faulty text and a clumsy translation, are a little tedious and arid, yet,

with Christ to interpret, we find every detail of the renovated temple, symbolic of Him whose body was the temple, destroyed and raised again, and we are moved to gratitude because we are now to worship not in a temple built of stone, or in a house which is made with hands, but in that living temple whose builder and maker is God. And then from Ezekiel we pass on to Daniel, where every page is glowing with colour and palpitating with life, and where the pure and patient exile instructs us in the seasons and the postures, as well as in the subjects, of prayers.

If, therefore, the devout reader will diligently pursue his way through the varying landscape of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, a chapter a day, with Christ as his companion and his guide, he will find that this Book has provided an extent and variety of devotion which far excel the most fervent and the most enlightened of the professed manuals.

2. *The use of references.*

The marginal references in our Bibles, and particularly those supplied in the Revised Version, are a great aid to devotion, though here again some effort and diligence are demanded. The marginal passages which

are brought, to flank and to illustrate the passage we are reading, produce something of the effect that a stereoscope gives to a photograph—the subject stands out in relief and begins to live; every detail takes its proper place, and stands in perspective. Frequently a passage which has become too familiar to excite attention, or one which is too obscure or too dull to move devotion, will, by the careful use of the references, start into new meaning, and be quick with spiritual power. A phrase which has become undistinctive, like an old coin, is suddenly burnished, the outlines are clear, and the superscription can be read. Or a word, not very suggestive in itself, when followed through the references, proves to be the unobtrusive entrance into a delightful vista of discovery, and from the excursion the mind returns to the original passage enriched and probably adoring.

Suppose it be the practice of the devotional hour to read one Psalm a day, and one paragraph from the Gospel, following the Psalter and Gospels from beginning to end, and then back again to the beginning, it is well each day to make either Psalm or Gospel-paragraph the subject of such an exercise in the use of the references.

Let us take, for example, Psalm lxxvi., and note carefully how its devotional uses are enlarged by means of the references. It is a song of victory, celebrating a great deliverance of the chosen people and of the Holy City. The Lord has entirely defeated the foe, and the rescued population, in meekness and gratitude, ascribe all the glory to Him. Here at once we take our place at His feet, to praise God for our own deliverances, both temporal and spiritual, and we seek for some instrument of music on which to praise Him for the great things He hath done for us in Christ Jesus our Lord. We turn to the references for the title, and we find that not only Asaph, the professional singer, but David also, the warrior and the king, would handle the stringed instrument in praise. And we find that the instrument of praise is called for, not only in the moment of national victory, but also in the quiet evening of every day, before the weary body lies down to rest. In the first verse the reference for "known" enlarges the idea of Judah and Israel, by specifying that the Lord has made His name known in their palaces; and the reference for "Salem" in the second verse carries us to the mystical story of Melchizedek, and through him brings us face to face with the

"Priest for ever" after his order. Thus we pause in Judah until we have searched the palaces, and meditate on Salem until we have met the King; and through the typology of Scripture we become sharers of that larger victory in which all thrones and powers will be brought into subjection to the Lord and to His Christ. The references have turned the record of a local victory into the celebration of the final spiritual triumph. Then the references to the tabernacle bring out, on the one hand, that it is a pavilion of refuge in danger (Psa. xxvii. 5), and on the other hand, that there is a possibility of the Lord removing His tabernacle from a rebellious people (Lam. ii. 6); and we are driven to the petition, that we may not quench the Spirit, and cause Him to depart from us. Then the references to the "dwelling-place in Zion" excite us to a holy joy that God is willing to dwell among men, and remind us that He dwells with them because He has redeemed them; the dwelling-place becomes the scene and the occasion of further praise. In verse 3 the breaking of the bow and of the fiery shafts, which is here only an incident of a particular victory, becomes in the references a glorious promise of the prolonged peace when the warfare will be ended, and the weapons

will be needed no more (Psa. xlvi. 9; Ezek. xxxix. 9). In verse 4 the references (Isa. xiv. 25; Ezek. xxxix. 4; Nah. ii. 13) show that by the mountains of prey we are to understand the mountains of the Holy Land on which the Assyrian host has been defeated and despoiled; we are carried to the days when the Lord turned back the army of Sennacherib from the gates of Jerusalem, we hear the prayer of Hezekiah, when he spread the contumelious letter before the Lord, and we connect the glory of God in our deliverance with the almost despairing entreaties which we pour out in our distress. In verse 5 the references more definitely identify the Psalm with the defeat of Sennacherib. We learn how the stout-hearted were far from righteousness, and therefore the Lord saved His people from them (Isa. xlvi. 12), and the slumber into which the foe has fallen, in the sleep which knows no waking (Psa. xiii. 3; 2 Kings xix. 25; Jer. li. 39; Nah. iii. 18). We praise God for the day when wickedness will be destroyed for ever, and we take heart, because the foes against which we at present contend are not only to lose the strength of their hands, but are one day to fall into an endless sleep. In verse 6 the striking phrase describing the chariot with the horse still in

the slumber of death is connected with the song of Miriam on the deliverance from Egypt (Exod. xv. 1, 21), and that, by many mystical associations, suggests the redemption of our souls which we owe to Christ; and we thank Him that the fierce pursuers, the sins which once chased us into the waters of the deep, now slain by Him, lie motionless, and powerless to harm. In verse 7 the first reference enhances the majesty and the terror of God, of whom all men must stand in awe (Psa. xlvii. 2); the second reference softens the majesty into tenderness by reminding us that though none can stand before Him in His anger, He is very merciful, and not strict to mark iniquity (Psa. cxxx. 3). In verse 8, where the earth is silent and trembling at the voice of God from heaven, the references carry us to the glorious victories and subsequent tranquillity of the pious king, Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. xx. 29, 30), and then to the prayer of Habakkuk, that great passage between the soul and God, in which we are reminded of His unapproachable majesty, only to be taught that "the just shall live by faith" (Hab. ii. 20). In verse 9 the gracious picture of the Lord arising to succour and save the meek who trust in Him, is by the reference (Psa. ix. 7, 8) completed

with a glimpse of His judgment-throne, and of the power which extends equally over all men and nations. In verse 10, the wonderful thought, that the very wrath of man is turned to the praise of God, and is, as it were, girt on His thigh for a weapon, is illustrated by the example of Pharaoh, whose obstinacy in resistance to the Lord, only elicited the splendid series of His saving signs (Ex. ix. 16); and by another reference to the deliverance from Egypt we are cast again on the love of Christ which, by the misguided wrath of men, incurred the redemptive passion of the cross. In verse 11, the references expand and emphasise first, the vows which gratitude makes to God (Psa. lxxxvii. 7), then the offerings which are brought to Him even by kings (Psa. lxviii. 29), and finally the fear which is due to Him, even from a chosen and favoured servant like Isaac (Gen. xxxi. 42, 53); and one more reference (Isa. viii. 13) admonishes us that even in the moments of gladness and gratitude we may not diminish the awe and the reverence which are due to the infinite God. And finally, in verse 12, while the one reference endorses the terror of God (Psa. xlvii. 2), the other reference (Isa. xviii. 5) sheds a softening light on the cutting off of kings and princes by using the figure

of the vine, in which the pruning of the branches and the lopping of the leaves are methods which make for fruitfulness.

The Psalm was taken at random, and it will be seen how the use of the references enriches it as a means of devotion; there is no other Psalm in the Psalter which would not be similarly enriched by the adoption of the same method. The same method applied to a passage in the New Testament, and especially to the Gospels, yields even richer results; but every part of the Old Testament, even the most unpromising, opens out some unexpected vistas through the marginal references, and it will be seen how this inexhaustible manual of devotion will serve for even the longest human life, when we realise that the Bible is not devotionally explored until every part of it has, with fresh powers and with prayerful zeal, been used as we have just used Psalm lxxvi.

3. *The use of a subject index.*

The subject index, which is given in our best modern editions of the Bible, may be, like the marginal references, a constant aid to devotion. An idea or a truth may be traced out from the beginning to the end of Scripture, as a stream may be followed from its fountain head to its estuary. Take, for

example, the name "God," and trace out the several attributes and workings of the Divine nature. In doing so the reader will make one of the most surprising discoveries in the Bible; for the texts thus explored will be found in many cases to gain in significance by being taken out of their context. It is as if a number of gems were scattered over the highway, and the reader picks them up and arranges them in a crown to lay at the feet of God. It begins to appear in how true a sense the sap, which issues in the consummate fruit, is vitally present even in the obscurest fibres of the root. Suppose we light upon some of the tenderer descriptions of the Divine character, "The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deut. xxxiii. 27), or that exquisite picture in Zephaniah, where God is presented as a mother singing joyful songs over her child (Zeph. iii. 17), or "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, these may forget, yet will not I forget thee" (Isa. xlix. 15). These passages in their context apply only to Israel as a people, and they are promises, therefore, of national survival, and of the Lord's maintenance of the Jewish religion; but when we

approach them from the standpoint of a personal relation, established in Christ between God and the soul, they become a most marvellous revelation of the God whose name is love; and as, under the guidance of the Spirit, these tender and melting designations come home to the heart, they bring the reader in gratitude and praise to the embrace of the Father who is thus described and revealed.

Or take the name of Christ in the index, and examine in detail the titles He bears, the works that He accomplishes, and the several types which foreshadowed Him; and you will gain an extraordinary impression of the way in which the person manifested in the Gospels strikes His roots deep into history, and bears the finished fruits in the apostolic writings. The unity of Scripture will appear—the unity which is constituted by the preparation, the foreshadowing, the manifestation, the reception, and the eternal working of Christ Jesus our Lord. Here again the texts will often shine more brilliantly when removed from the context, for the long process by which Christ came into the world was like the slow coming of the day, the light mastering the darkness first in a pallid promise, then in streaks of dawn, then in surprising flushes of transient glory, then in

pauses and hesitations, and finally in the rising and climbing of the sun. Many of these forecasts of Christ are recognisable, not in the surroundings to which they are attached, but in the final light to which they lead.

Or trace out with the index the emblems and the work of the Holy Spirit; and whatever doubt may rest upon that mystery, one thing at least becomes plain, namely, that the writers of the Bible were guided by the Spirit, and that all unconsciously to themselves they were contributing to that full manifestation of the Spirit which is God's supreme gift to man.

This study of the Godhead in Scripture alone will teach us all that we need to know of the blessed Trinity, and will bring us into such a relation with God, and experience of Him, as alone constitutes the devotional life.

Then, let such subjects as Sin, Forgiveness, Redemption, Holiness, Heaven, the Future Life, be traced out in similar detail; or take the virtues and the graces which are to adorn the soul, Humility, Purity, Simplicity, Love, Hope, Faith, or Courage; the study of each of these will be found to form a completer treatise than the best works of the essayists or of the Masters of Sentences. The Bible

does not contain essays, but it offers the essential materials out of which the soul may diligently construct essays on these, and all other vital, things for itself.

Finally, work up the subject of Prayer. By the aid of the index note the nature and conditions of prayer, watch the great souls, and also the lesser souls, at prayer, and study the very numerous prayers, shorter or longer, which are scattered throughout the Scripture. This will reveal how essentially the Bible is a manual of devotion, and how the whole world and human life are by the golden chains of prayer hung about the throne of God. From Adam's first childlike speech to God, right through to the closing petition "Even so, come, Lord Jesus, quickly," the Bible, as it stands, is a unique evidence that man must pray, that prayer must be heard, and that our chief business on earth is to weave our lives into the life of God by the constant movement to and fro of the shuttle of prayer.

But now the modern reader may demur, and knowing little or much of the eager and restless criticism which has been applied to the Bible, may ask whether the book is not discredited as a revelation, and depreciated as a manual of devotion. There may be many who have practically ceased to use the Bible

because it is now treated, in common parlance, like any other book. Just so far as criticism has crept into the closet and deadened the instinct of prayer, it must be resolutely faced, and the doubt which is disturbing the religious life must be overcome by a deeper understanding. Let it therefore be observed once for all, that criticism does not and cannot in the least alter the Bible as a fact. Its sole work is to reconsider the dates and the authorship of the several books, and possibly to readjust the order of the parts and the development of the truths. It can no more affect the intrinsic quality and the actual use of the Bible, than the architectural criticism of a great cathedral can alter the use of the building for worship. When for the first time the eye is captivated by the great pile of Lincoln Cathedral, reared above the red-roofed houses which cluster round it, and far removed from the worksheds and chimney stacks of the modern town, the mind at once acclaims it as a mysterious link between the earth beneath and the heaven above, and fancies it rather come down from heaven than sprung out of the earth. And when on a nearer approach the feet compass its hoary and sculptured walls, tread the long nave, or climb the steps of that Choir of the Angels,

the soul is subdued by the sense of the long derivation of the beauty of holiness, of the accumulating centuries, and of that aspiring nature of man which has sought by all the resources of art to express its hope of some temple which is built by God. Now are these solemn impressions justly affected by the discovery that the great building is the work of many periods and of many hands? Is the spirit of worship injured because the date of a chapel is brought down a century or two? Does the angel choir lose its sculptural richness because we find that it was not the work of St. Hugh? Are the stalls less suitable for prayer because their carving belongs to a still more recent date? And when we observe that the great western front has no relation to the structure of the nave, but is, indeed, a splendid façade reared by a later hand, a hand as reverent as the old, to glorify the approach to the ancient shrine, much as the exuberance of Chronicles gives a fulness and a meaning to the balder narrative of Kings, does this discovery in the least detract from the first sublime impression, or disincline our feet to enter by the decorated door, and tread the courts, of this venerable house of God? Nay, how childish would be the mind which, because one of the curiosities of

this great building is the sculptured imp which is known as the Devil of Lincoln, should regard this grotesque intrusion as a reason for rejecting the soaring strength of the clustered shafts, or the blending colours of the painted windows !

Now the idea that criticism has affected or can affect the actual quality and storied teaching of the Bible, is as impertinent as the suggestion that an architectural study can close and disuse Lincoln Cathedral. And, if we will be candid, we shall even find that the literary criticism, which is tracing the dates and the origins of the several parts of Scripture, is enhancing the reasons for devotion by giving a clearer view of the historic evolution of religious truth, and the successive stages by which the spirit of man was trained, and the fulness of time for Christ's coming was realised, than could possibly be obtained, while the books of Scripture lay in the critical disorder, and attached to the conjectural authorship, which the scholars of Judaism or the Church writers of the second or third centuries were unable to correct. The glorious narratives of Genesis remain what they are, whenever they were composed; the law is not less the law of Moses, because the law-book which we call the Pentateuch did

not take its final form until after the Exile. To see that the book of Judges, with its primitive morality and appalling narratives, belongs to the earlier period of Hebrew history and literature, a period some centuries earlier than the spiritual and exalted book of Deuteronomy, is not to deny that Moses lived long before Samson; but it certainly is to get a juster notion of the slow degrees by which the revelation given to Moses worked itself out into the completeness and elevation of the Mosaic law in the later days of the Jewish Church. To re-date the Psalms is not to lose them; and to spread their authorship over the history of Israel, from the earliest times to the days of the Maccabees, is only to enhance the value of the Psalter, by showing how these flowers of praise and prayer, of contrition and forgiveness, of sorrow and of joy, blossom age after age in the changing circumstances of the national history.

And in the same way, no conceivable criticism can take away one jot or one tittle of the New Testament as we have it; the beauty and the power of the Gospels do not depend on the names to which their authorship is ascribed, but are due entirely to the contents, and to that portrait of Jesus which no painter could have conceived, and no poet

could have imagined; it is the subject that authenticates the writers, not the writers that authenticate the subject. And what a confusion of thought it is to suppose that the other books of the New Testament depend upon their human authorship, or upon a chronological order! The Apocalypse remains the same whether John the Theologian is John the son of Zebedee or not; and when ingenious critics revel in the task of showing that St. Paul's letters were not written by St. Paul, it must not be supposed that the religious value of these letters is affected. Even if Van Manen's extravagant contentions were established, that the four acknowledged letters—Romans, i. and ii. Corinthians, and Galatians—were not written by St. Paul, there they would still stand, four documents obviously from one pen, containing the most agile reasoning, the most impassioned poetry, the most pathetic appeals, the most splendid insight into spiritual truth, the most startling witness to the Christ, known no longer after the flesh but after the Spirit, experienced as an inward power of cleansing and of life, of holiness and of love, such as no other literature presents, such as no other writer conceived. If Van Manen were right—though his contention is rather a clever paradox than

a serious argument—the only difference it would make would be, that we should transfer our human gratitude from that great figure, whom we know independently through the Acts of the Apostles, to the unknown writer of these priceless letters.

The argument cannot be further laboured here, but we may take our Bible into the closet and use it in prayer, convinced that criticism is as powerless to invalidate it, as in the third century Diocletian was powerless to destroy it.

A Prayer on the Use of the Bible.

O my God, I thank Thee for this Holy Book which is profitable to me for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness; grant me diligence to study, and the light of the Holy Spirit to understand, what Thou hast given me, that I may be completely furnished unto every good work. As Thou didst speak to holy men of old, so condescend to speak to me; as Thou didst lead them to confess their sins and the sins of their people, so Thou leadest me to confess that I and mine have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep; we have wandered into a far country and fed our souls upon husks. But,

Father, we arise and come unto Thee. We have sinned against heaven and against Thee, and are not worthy to be called Thy children. But, since this Book is full of Christ, and as He came to seek and to save that which is lost, we are encouraged as we read, to ask Thy pardon for His sake, and to believe that we have it in His name. Justified by faith, may we have peace with Thee; filled with Thy Spirit, may we be kept from falling, and as day by day new light and truth break out upon us from Thy Word, may we walk in the light and live according to the truth; may Christ be formed in us, and may we grow up into the fulness of His stature. Thanks be unto Thee, O God, for Thy unspeakable gift in Jesus Christ. Amen.

"Oh that I knew how all Thy lights combine,
And the configurations of their glory;
Seeing not only how each verse doth shine,
But all the constellations of the story.
This verse marks that, and both do make a motion
Unto a third, that ten leaves off doth lie:
These as dispersed herbs do watch a potion,
These three make up some Christian's destiny;
Such are Thy secrets, which my life makes good,
And comments on Thee; for in everything
Thy words do find me out, and parallels bring,
And in another make me understood.
Stars are poor books, and oftentimes do miss:
This book of stars lights to eternal bliss."

GEORGE HERBERT.

IV

THE UNIVERSE AS AN AID TO DEVOTION

"O, break my heart; but break it as a field
Is by the plough up-broken for the corn.
O, break it as the buds, by green leaf sealed,
Are, to unloose the golden blossoms, torn."

IT is remarkable, that though our Lord commanded us to enter into a chamber when we prayed, He Himself obviously preferred the open air. For His longer exercises of prayer, at least, He would choose a garden where the growing things and the songs of birds speak of the living God, or a desert place where, free from the intrusion of men, He could at once watch the ways of the wild creatures, and receive the visitations of angels; or, best of all, a mountain-top, from which He could see the land of far distances and feel the sky itself to be the roof of His

chamber. Evidently, in His prayers the universe was His "closet with shut doors." He lived an open-air life; His pulpit was a boat on the lake; He preached open-air sermons. His private interviews were by the well, or on the public way; and it is more than probable that Nicodemus found Him, not, as we sometimes imagine, in a city street, but on the hill near Jerusalem, where the night winds were sighing through the olives, and the starry dome above suggested a coming down from heaven and the entering into it.

The use He made of parables implies, that to Him the whole universe was a parable; they were not casual analogies, or happy illustrations of things which baffled language, but the natural objects and processes were themselves the language, which waited only for their Interpreter. His thought was, that if He turned men's attention to the flowers which were springing in the fields, to the crops which were sown and reaped, to the fig-tree and to the vine, to the fish caught in the net, to the labourers on the ground, to the children at their play, to the father in the home, to the bridegroom and the bride, to the red of the dawn or of the evening, to the wind that blows as it lists, to the torrents which rush from the melting of the snows, to

the sands which shift, and to the rocks which stand, to the stormy waves and to the great calm—He would, by these familiar things in the visible world, be revealing the realities of the kingdom of heaven. When He wished to suggest the cleansing of the soul, or the thirst which it feels for God, it was enough to speak mystically of that element in the natural world which, springing from hidden fountains, pours through self-chosen channels, and at once cleanses our bodies from defilements, and with its cool refreshment allays their burning thirst. And if He wished to show how a spiritual life within, could by faith in Him be generated and nurtured, He quite naturally used the image of the bread and wine which formed the daily meal; and regarding His own human body as a symbol, and a revelation in the natural world of the spiritual sacrifice and love of God, He spoke of His flesh given as the bread for our eating, and of His blood poured out as the wine for the soul of man.

This great and all-pervading thought of Christ concerning the universe certainly has its roots in the teaching of the Old Testament. It will be remembered how Bishop Andrewes begins his daily devotions by a meditation on the works of one day of the

creation, and thus recognises the real purpose of the creation-story in the opening chapter of the Bible, which is not to give us a scientific account of the processes by which the universe developed, but to dispose all the objects which meet the eye of a dweller on this planet into six inclusive groups, in order that the devout mind may contemplate all the works of God in the course of a week, as a preparation for contemplating God Himself on the seventh day. And running throughout the Old Testament literature is a thought which may sometimes be dismissed too carelessly as mere poetic fancy, for it is indeed the fundamental thought of Old Testament theology—no more poetical than the universe itself is a poem, no less theological than the whole is a thought of God—the recurrent suggestion, that everything which man sees and hears and knows in nature is a definite witness of Him. Thus in the book of Job, to answer the crushing sorrow of the human heart, God is content to reveal Himself as the Maker of Orion, Arcturus, and the Pleiades in the heavens above, and of behemoth and the battle-horse in the earth beneath. In Psalm civ. the whole panorama of nature is treated as a manifestation of God: the light is His garment, the

clouds are His chariot, wind and fire are His messengers, and His activities are seen in the life of the beasts and of the birds, and even in those inanimate creatures the ships of the sea; and in this landscape of the Divine activity is included the figure of man, as he goes to his work in the morning and returns to his rest at night. Repeatedly, as in the magnificent prayer of Habakkuk, the terrific phenomena of the storm, thunder, and lightning, and the rush of rain are recognised as the self-expression of God. And in that earliest of our written prophets, Amos, the denunciations of sin and the calls for righteousness are more than once interrupted to designate God, the Author of both, as the Maker of the great constellations of the heavens, of the morning light, and of the evening shade, and of the swelling floods, which sometimes visit the earth with fertility, and at other times threaten it with destruction.

We see, therefore, how Scriptural and how Christlike is the thought, that the whole scheme of things which meets the eye and engages the mind is calculated to reveal God, and to move the heart to devotion. We are very near the springs of the spiritual life when, walking by the sea at

eventide, we, with Wordsworth, become aware that—

> "The holy time is quiet, as a nun
> Breathless with adoration."

We are not victims of poetic dreams if as we pause and listen:

> "The mighty Being is awake
> Who doth with His eternal motion make
> A noise like thunder everlastingly."

And while, like the child who walked with the poet, we may be lying in Abraham's bosom, and worshipping at the temple's inner shrine without being conscious of it, we do well to rouse ourselves to call upon all that is within us to bless the Holy name, and to join consciously in that worship which we have surprised Nature in offering to her Creator.

Richard Jefferies, in that book which, as the quintessence of his life, he calls *The Story of my Heart*, tells us how he would lie in the sand-pit, listening and absorbing, through a long summer day, until he became conscious of the Being in which both man and God

were merged, the ultimate reality, more worshipful than the forms of our thought and the resources of our language are able to express; and found himself engaged in an act of ultimate devotion, when he designed only the observation of the minute things of nature.

Sometimes the mere aspect of earth and sea and sky, the winds bending the trees or waving the corn, the birds or the forest-animals busy with their affairs, or the happy insects droning in the summer heat, will come over the soul as the revelation of the Divine goodness and comfort which animate the universe, and Blackmore's words can be sincerely uttered: "Who can see such large kindly doings and not be ashamed of human sorrow?"

What countless multitudes of the human family have been moved to unutterable thoughts by the simple contemplation of the sky! To Kant the starry heavens were an equal wonder with the moral law, each growing more impressive with familiarity. And Balaustion, gazing into the limped sky that overarches the Mediterranean, asks—

> "Can cark or care or envy have a part
> In yon wide liberality of blue?"

I remember receiving one of these Divine impressions of the universe, which, like the phantasm of the dead coming once in a lifetime, as if to assure one of the life beyond, break in upon us now and then beyond our expectation or control, but leave us with a conviction, never again to be lost, that Nature is the garment of God, and that He is uttering Himself in all the events and experiences out of which the fabric of our day is woven. I was walking alone on a mountain below the Wengern Alp one beautiful August day, and turning round I saw the range of the Jungfrau, the Mönch, and the Eiger; below was the deep valley of Lauterbrunnen; the heights were white with snow, the depths were green with meadows or dark with the serried ranks of pines. I do not know what happened, nor what occasion was given by my circumstances or my thought, but suddenly, and for some moments, I became aware of this majestic scene as the manifestation of God; and I knew that this brief and joyful revelation was a new claim upon me to surrender my heart to His love, and to offer my life to His service.

It should be observed, then, that the things around us are constantly presenting themselves as revelations of the things unseen, as

evidences of the Divine Creator, as incentives and means to prayer and devotion.

If you are fortunate enough to possess a garden, and have the leisure to cultivate it, you have there a speaking oratory and a call, changing with the seasons, but always the same in its burden, to "draw nigh to God," and to let Him "draw nigh to you." One poet-gardener of our day, T. E. Browne, very justly says:

"A garden is a lovesome thing, God wot,
Rose plot,
Fringed pool,
Ferned grot,
The veriest school
Of peace, and yet the fool
Maintains that God is not.
Not God in gardens when the eve is cool?
Nay, but I have a sign;
'Tis very sure, He walks in mine."

It is much to be desired that in the future we should live, if not in the country, yet in garden-cities, and that every one should know by experience the successive miracles which produce the flowers in their seasons, bring back the migrant birds, and sustain through the winter the birds which are the petitioners of our charity. But still more

it is to be desired that every owner or keeper of a garden should know that he has a means of devotion under his hand, and should see in the sowing of the seeds, in the pruning of the shrubs, in the blossoms and in the fruit, in the mowing of the grass, in the falling of the leaves, and in the gentle showers or the pelting rain, in the sunshine, and in the cloud, the perpetual parable which God is addressing to his soul.

For the same reason it is a wholesome instinct which impels us to seek at times the deserts and the solitudes of Nature. In the desert is a means of great devotion, sometimes as a preparation for signal service, as when John the Baptist grew up and preached in the wilderness, or as when Paul sought the desert of Arabia, that he might learn a gospel to preach in the most crowded haunts of men; sometimes as a scene of temptation, in which the soul can learn the number and the strength of its spiritual adversaries, and also the power which can overcome them. For though it is an open question, whether it is desirable that any one should be an anchorite for life—"it is not good for man to be alone"—yet it is necessary that every one should have a share of the anchorite's life, and should learn in these seasons of retirement what is

most needed, but never can be found, in the bustle and pressure of the world.

And no doubt we do well, as occasion offers, to flee to the mountains. Whether the tourist rightly uses his opportunity or not, it is hardly conceivable that any human being has ever set his foot upon the crest of a hill, and seen the sunset or the thunderstorm from such an elevation, without being visited by thoughts which are akin to devotion. Isabella Bird narrates how, in the Rocky Mountains, she came out one morning to find the wild half-caste, mountain Jim, gazing, with his hat off, at the glory of the sunrise; and when he saw her he exclaimed, "Yes! there is a God."

But if we climb our mountains with premeditation and seek them (though we be mere holiday tourists) with the same motive that took Moses to Sinai, Elijah to Horeb, and Christ to the Mount of Transfiguration, we shall be rewarded by finding, that on the mountain heights the law of God has been written in our hearts, the still small voice has spoken within, and the transfiguration has taken place, which will prepare us to meet and to cure the sorrows and troubles of the world. But even for those far too numerous people in the crowded modern world, who

know little of gardens, and nothing of Nature's solitudes and heights, so insistent and omnipresent is God's self-manifestation in Nature, that there remains always enough to train and educate the soul if once the secret is discovered. Even in the crowded alleys of a city, nothing can completely exclude the strip of sky and the glimpse of the trailing clouds. The gentle showers and the gleams of sunlight are the more expressive because of the strange surroundings. In a garret a window-box, or at least a plant, may speak to a child or to a sufferer of the living power of God.

Nowhere do trees appear so wonderful as in streets and squares that are paved with stones; the parks and open spaces of a city are more eloquent of the creative power because of the immediate contrast with the confused and begrimed handiwork of man. Nature can say much with a very little tongue, and the breaking of the lilacs or the breath of a wallflower in a city garden, may take the heart by surprise, and set it in as real a relation with God as if it were placed under the cedars of Lebanon, or were charmed with the luxuriance of a tropical forest. It is one of the laws of our nature that we value most the things which it is hardest to obtain,

and therefore the very rarity of Nature's salutations in great cities gives to them an additional sweetness and significance. And, by a compensation which must be intentional, the smoke and grime of men's habitations give to the sun in his rising or his setting such a mystery and splendour, that if we wish to recall the most ravishing effects of the coming and the going of the day, we shall probably find the mind reverting, not to the great spectacles which we have seen on the shore or on mountain-tops, but to some visionary moments, when the glory of the sinking sun has suddenly transformed the piled buildings of a busy city, and shown it to us for a moment like the New Jerusalem, descending out of heaven. There is, thank God, no spot of His earth so marred or defiled by the folly, the ignorance, or the greed of man, but over it there is for ever passing the changing pageant of cloud and sun, of wind and rain; on the charred heaps and the rude slag of the disused mines the gentle leaves of grass are eager to appear; every ruin is quickly covered with the soft mantle of the moss, or coloured with the lichen-stains, and even where vegetation fails, and the polluted rivers roll down steaming dyes and the foul refuse of the mills, and where the vomiting chim-

neys hang a perpetual cloud over the noisome town, still God thrusts His ministry of nature and His parable of spiritual things under the bleared eyes of men; for the very coal which blackens the landscape is the witness of the providence which transformed and stored the primeval forests for the use of man, and the chemical processes, which fill the air with stifling fumes, reveal a mystery of designing wisdom which, if less attractive, is not less convincing, than the chemistry which tinges the leaves with chlorophyll, or paints the petals of the flowers with their varied hues. And most wonderful of all, if the other mysteries of nature are removed or hidden, there remains to every human being that which is nature's supreme product and God's most striking witness—the human body itself, the complicated machine so fearfully and wonderfully made, so obviously divine in its intention, that it is described as the proper temple of God. Your own body is part of the universe; it is that part in and through which you know the whole, and it is not too much to say that, if you would consider the miracles of the senses, the delicate machinery of the organs, and, above all, the mystery of consciousness and of reason, you would involuntarily exclaim, "Surely God was in this

place, and I knew it not ; this is none other than the house of God and this the gate of heaven."

Now it must not be thought that this devotional impression of the universe is connected only with the poetic instinct, as if it were rather the creation of the fancy, than a reality that appeals to the mind from without. Far from this ; science itself is the main instrument by which the universe makes a Divine appeal to men. As science extends her domain, and by her laborious and accurate records enlarges our knowledge of the infinitely great and of the infinitesimally small, of the delicate adjustments, of the interdependence of the parts, of the subtle forces always at work, of the unsuspected substances and powers which are constantly revealing themselves—the human mind must be filled with a deeper awe and a more genuine reverence.

No transient feelings of the poetic imagination can affect it so permanently as the abiding miracles of fact. Thus science itself is, and must increasingly be, a great aid to devotion. This is so important and so little recognised a truth that it is desirable to dwell on it for a moment.

Prof. Clifford, that brilliant Cambridge

man, who, starting as a High Churchman, swung round into Agnosticism, and became the most vehement opponent of the Christian faith, propounded the view that as mankind lost its religious belief through the growth of science, religion would be superseded by what he called Cosmic Emotion; that is to say, he thought that the universe itself, as science discloses and describes it, would move human hearts with such reverence and humility, such gratitude and love, such moral and spiritual aspiration, that men would ultimately derive from science all that formerly they had derived from religion. That is no doubt the direction in which science must move, though it was only a reactionary extravagance which made Prof. Clifford think that Christianity was superseded by such a movement. The notion that science and religion are antagonistic, or that Christianity is discredited by science, is so curiously mistaken, that the wonder is how it can ever have been entertained. There are, of course, certain minds like Huxley's or Haeckel's, naturally deficient in tenderness and insight, which may, perhaps, by that deficiency, be driven to the eager pursuit of science, but science has not produced the deficiency, and such minds would be equally hard, positive, unsympathetic, and un-

spiritual, if they had directed their powers to any other object. The greatest men of science, on the other hand—Darwin or Pasteur, Lister or Kelvin—are almost always men marked by humility and reverence, and sympathy and strong religious instincts, so that even if the extension of their knowledge requires them to modify or to surrender some of the tenets of the traditional faith—and even if the truths which they discover seem to transform the religion of the past, which is by these very discoveries developing into the religion of the future—they do not quit their attitude of adoration or lose the spirit of devotion; they are in their day and generation the Greathearts, who lead the human spirit on from one stage to another of its Divine unfolding life. Science and religion antagonistic! Why it is doubtful whether a single name can be mentioned in the first rank of science which is not essentially and truly religious. The lesser minds, which lose religion as they gain science, only exhibit the limitations by which lesser minds are bound; their unbelief and denials are not due to science but to the want of science; they have not energy or insight enough to include in their scientific survey such important fields as the human spirit, the moral life, the great

religious personalities, and the permanent religious forces. Professing to be scientific, they leave out moral science and religious science; they know nothing of God because they know little of man, and they ignore Christ because they ignore man and God.

But, that advance in the knowledge of the universe must be a growth in the spirit of devotion, is very evident to any one who is taught by the Spirit, and whose life is hidden with Christ in God; for science is nothing else but the human mind thinking the thoughts of the Creator after Him. If, for example, "the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork," the silent watcher of the sky, who through the long night hours is resolving a star cluster, or searching for an undiscovered planet, is on the track of the infinite mind, and must return from his excursion with an overpowering thought of God, which bends the knee in reverence, and gives dignity to common life. "Think of Herschel's great star clusters," said Tennyson to his brother Frederick, who felt shy and awkward in society—and no man can reflect on the heavens which are the works of God's hands, and "the moon and stars which He has made," without feeling that humility which is the beginning, and that exaltation

which is the crown, of a true devotion. And if "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof," the geologist cannot read the records of the rocks, trace the succession of vanished forms of life, and observe how the land was formed by æonian changes for man's habitation, and the waters were fixed within the bounds of their mighty cisterns for his security, without wondering at the Wisdom which was by the side of God at the Creation, and whose delight must have been ever with the sons of men.

And, when science begins her investigation into Life, still more is she constrained to become the handmaid of religion, for far down beneath the limits of our unaided senses reaches a world of life which only the microscope has revealed. Beautiful and wonderful as are the plants and the animals which come within the range of our senses, the minute organisms which the microscope reveals are no less exquisite in their forms or delicate in their colours: and the amazing thought suggests itself that if our sight were stronger, or our instruments more perfect, we might discover organic forms and endless beauties, reaching as far beyond the limits of the microscope as those limits are beyond our natural sight. The wonders of fairy-land, and the miracles

in the legends of the Saints, are tame and trite compared with the realities of the organic world; and how can any sane mind track these wonders down unending vistas, and make the discovery that its own conscious life stands but midway between the endless forms of intelligence beneath, and inconceivable reaches of intelligence above, without recognising that its only attitude is that of solemn wonder and thankful joy towards the Being from whom all life proceeds.

The plant-world is a fairy-land more beautiful and more surprising than that which was ruled by Oberon and Titania. When Wordsworth's eye lighted on the dancing daffodils by the shore of Ulleswater, it might seem to be but a poet's glee which treasured up the memory for "that inward eye which is the bliss of solitude;" but when the father of modern botany, Linnæus, traversing Salisbury Plain, came upon the mantle of golden gorse which was flung over it, he involuntarily fell on his knees and thanked God who had produced such a spectacle. Poetry breeds, and treasures and enjoys, but science worships. The lists of the genera and the species, the amazing variations which yet maintain the common characteristics, the delicate devices

of the reproductions of plants, the beauty of form, the blending of colours, and the mystery of fragrance, are never sufficiently admired or understood until the mind has laboured under the guidance of science to map out the whole domain.

And lest the wonder should fail because the secrets of the universe are fully discovered, and devotion should die in satiety, it would seem that the very principle of the universe in relation to the human mind is, that it should be perpetually unfolding and disclosing new possibilities. Electricity was in the world from the beginning, but its discovery took the human mind by surprise; the Röntgen rays are only new in the sense that they are newly discovered; and Radium has cherished its self-fed flame of heat and light from the beginning. Comte, the great founder of the Positivist philosophy, less than half a century ago declared that it must always be impossible to know the substances of which the heavenly bodies are made; but by the aid of the spectrum we are now assured that they are made of the same elements as those with which we are familiar on the earth, and if any other element mixed in their composition, we could discover it. Science, therefore, so prudent to limit what she knows, sets no

bounds to what she may discover; she is launched on a quest which may continue for ever; the human mind will not cease to wonder, or wondering to adore.

"We live, then, in a bright and breathing world,"

as Wordsworth says; it is quick with intelligence and with design. The idea that it can be resolved into matter, or explained by matter is highly nonsensical. As Sir Oliver Lodge says, matter itself is unknown, and has no fixity; matter is the great mystery which demands explanation. Its cohesion, its rigidity, its impenetrability are mere illusions; between the atoms there are spaces, and in each invisible atom there are millions of molecules; subtle forces pass easily through these solid bodies, and Life, the inscrutable guest, enters and withdraws in a way which we cannot explain. Just as the sound of a voice will arrange a film of mobile sand into a constant shape, so the forms of flowers and trees and animals, of mountains, of continents, of stars and constellations, are the shapes which are taken by the Divine voice, uttering itself to the eye and to the intelligence of man. We may be deaf and blind, or gross of eye and ear, by the deliberate

perversion of the will, or by the sottish vices of the flesh; and men may doubtless live their lives in a stupid dream which mistakes the material for reality, and is insensible to the only reality—the spiritual; but the universe remains what it is—"Day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night showeth knowledge." The high-domed and blossoming world is not a charnel-house—death is in it only as an incident and a transition; it is all instinct with life and meaning, and speaks to us in the appeal of Wisdom, if haply we may understand. It is our business, therefore, while day by day we obey our Lord, and enter into the closet to pray, day by day also to follow His example, to go out and read the parable of the world, using it all as the place and the instrument of prayer.

The neglect of Nature and the suspicion of Science in the Church are un-Christlike, and must disappear as soon as we have the mind of Christ; for He is the instrument and agent of creation, and we are in a poor way for understanding His works of grace when we ignore His works of Nature. St. Bernard, we are told, was so absorbed in pious meditation as he walked along the shore of Lake Leman, that he never so much as observed the blue waters and the ring of snow-capped

mountains; that is to say, his mind was closed against one of the surest ways by which God reveals Himself, and purges men of passion and fanaticism. But when St. Francis of Assisi opened his heart to the birds and to the trees, and sang his canticle of the sun and water, and earth and fire, a warm thrill of life passed through the chilled body of the Church; it seemed as if Jesus were walking the earth again, and the story of the Gospels had become once more intelligible.

And the Church's suspicion of science has brought upon her repeated rout and confusion. She treated Roger Bacon as if he had dealings with Satan because he ventured to examine the mysteries of Nature; and for these seven centuries since she has always contrived to keep the same relation to scientific enterprise; she perpetually involves herself in a double difficulty, irritating the lovers of scientific truth by a prolonged resistance, and then filling her more ignorant devotees with indignation by her inevitable submission. And yet how misguided it is! For the world which St. John tells us lieth in the wicked one is not that sweet and sinless nature which Jesus took as the text of His sermons, but human life organised without God, the dark heart and rebellious will

which, because they are separated from Him, are indifferent to His works. And the remedy lies not in a churlish admission that the universe is to be tolerated, or in a grudging acceptance of the results of science, when they are achieved, but in the far more radical change of returning entirely to the mind of Christ. Nature is to be frankly accepted as God's symbolic language, which it is our business to interpret, and her ways are to be reverenced and loved as a mode of coming into communion with Him. Science is to be hailed as the handmaid and prophetess of religion; whoever sets himself to diligently and systematically investigate any department of the boundless field is to be recognised as a servant of God, and whoever makes and establishes a new discovery is to be honoured as His prophet. Then we shall rightly handle the beauties, the mysteries, and the powers of the system to which we belong; our religion will be kept true by the constant reception of truth, and our devotion will be strengthened by finding in all things the occasion of worship or of prayer, and by recognising the Holy Spirit pervading even the objects of sense

"And every common bush aflame with God."

A Prayer for Use in the Open Air.

O God, the Creator of heaven and earth and sea, Thou Lord Jesus Christ by whom and in whom they were created, Holy Spirit who broodest over chaos and workest out Divine order, grant me the eye to see and the heart to understand the manifold works which Thou hast in wisdom made. Let me use them all in reverence and humility, with gratitude and with love, and as I see them to be the work of Thy hands, may they direct my thought to Thee and bring me into holy communion with Thee. And while Thou teachest me to love the least and the weakest of Thy creatures, and reverently to accept that which I do not yet understand, enable me to understand this mysterious body in which I dwell, so curiously fashioned, so fearfully and wonderfully made, the holiest creation in this material world. Grant me Thy grace to restrain its appetites, to temper its passions and to preserve its powers, that as a good instrument and an obedient servant it may serve the regenerate soul, and in Thine infinite condescension may be a temple of the Holy Ghost, the place where Thine honour dwelleth: through Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen.

V

THE LIFE OF CHRIST AS THE MEANS OF DEVOTION[1]

THE two books, the Bible and Creation, are in many ways parallel to one another, as aids to the life of prayer. Each of them is varied and complex, demanding close and constant perusal, and in each of them there are dark places and obscurities which baffle the most practised reader; each of them is invaluable for the maintenance of the life with God: neither of them nor both together would of themselves suffice.

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[1] As a help to gain a fresh view of the Life of Christ, which is so familiar to us as often not to make its due impression upon us, it might be well to read either Delitzsch's *Day in Capernaum* or Dr. Stalker's *Life of Christ*, or that anonymous book, *As Others Saw Him*, or, best of all, that work of literary and spiritual genius, Dr. Abbott's *Philochristus* (Macmillan and Co.).

But there is a page in each of them which contains a passage of unique quality; and that passage, a key to the interpretation of both, becomes the supreme instrument of the devout life.

The life of Christ is the centre and core of the Bible, it is also the centre and core of the creation; it should become the centre and core of each individual life. *Exerceatur servus tuus in vita tua*, was the prayer of Thomas à Kempis; "let Thy servant be exercised in Thy life" is the desire which runs through the *Imitatio Christi*. That *Imitatio* has been an aid to many in realising the end, but it pales in importance before the Four Gospels themselves; and if only we can find the right use of the Gospels, we may reach that goal which Thomas à Kempis and all the followers of Christ have desired.

Jeremy Taylor, in his *Life of Christ*, gave a noble example of the use which may be made of the Gospels. Taking each section of the story in detail, he makes the most searching application of it to the practice of the Christian life, adding a prayer to be used for the assimilation of the truth which in each section has been elicited. One who should faithfully follow this great work day by day, learning the lesson and offering

the prayer, would assuredly be exercised in the life of Christ, and would make much progress in the imitation of the great example. But there is little hope that the busy mind of the twentieth century will be disposed to follow the elaborate and discursive method of the seventeenth century. The sustained eloquence, the vast learning, and the spiritual fervour which pervade the pages of Jeremy Taylor will delight every reader, but will not induce many to read.

Another and more modern book may be recommended—Dr. Stalker's *Imago Christi*. There with remarkable freshness the life of Christ is shown to throw light on every department of the life we are living to-day: on the life of the home and of the school, on public and political life, on business, on recreation, on social intercourse and on reading. It is a good instance of that surprising quality in the Gospels which makes them put forth new truths in each age with the regularity of the leaves and the blossoms in the spring.

That the Gospel story has a perennial interest, is plain from the number and popularity of Lives of Christ. Lasserre's modernised version of the Four Gospels in French ran through one edition after another

like a popular novel, until the Pope, who had given it his *imprimatur*, saw reason to suppress it. If Renan's Life of Jesus was popular for its easy mingling of scepticism and sentimentality with a true scholarship and a graceful style, Didon's Life of Jesus enjoyed an equal popularity in France, though it was only commended by its faithful attempt to present the story in the combined light of modern research and of the ancient faith.

But, without following the records of these Lives of Christ in other European countries, we must infer that the Gospels which furnish the materials for them all must be worthy of a close and constant study. And for the purpose we now have in view, the Gospels, precisely as they stand, are of infinitely greater value than even the most perfect Lives of Christ. Yes, the Gospels in their present number and their present order are the perfect Manual of Devotion. Already in the second century, Tatian, in his *Diatessaron*, which in recent years has been discovered, combined them into a harmony; and at the end of the century Irenæus supposed that the number four was as natural as the four elements or the four points of the compass. For indeed there is a singular perfection

in the fourfold repetition of the story when the characteristics of each narrative are observed. Criticism may shift the dates of the four documents, and may discuss the names of the authors, and in the discharge of its own function it may sift the facts and question the details; but it is totally unable to diminish the devotional value of the Gospels. We need not in this connection so much as raise the discussion of dates and authorship, historical correctness or authenticity; this book of the Four Gospels is in our hands as a means of devotion: each section of it serves the one end, each episode has its value, and in its completeness it furnishes such a discipline of the soul as the writers could never have created or conceived. Let us take a general survey of it, in order to appreciate the value of a fourfold narrative, and the significance of the established order.

1. *Matthew.* The First Gospel is peculiar in the stress that it lays on the discourses and parables of our Lord; it rests, as our earliest authority tells us, on certain *Logia*, a collection of His sayings. It properly begins the New Testament, because it constantly shows how, in the Gospel, sayings of the Old Testament are fulfilled. In the forefront

it presents what we call the Sermon on the Mount, the epitome of the Lord's teaching, in which the old law is transformed into the new Evangel. The narrative of events seems subordinate to the discourses, and follows, for the most part, the records of the Second Gospel.

2. *Mark.* The Second Gospel is a concise and graphic narrative of events, which might have been composed with the view of compressing the whole story into an hour's reading or recitation. There is reason to think that it represents the catechetical lessons which Peter was accustomed to give to the Churches. In it the "fact of Christ" is sharply and clearly sketched, and with the exception of the last sixteen verses, which are added from another source, it forms a simple portrait which shows Christ to the reader as others saw Him.

3. *Luke.* The Third Gospel is a more elaborate treatise, which rests avowedly on the collation and combination of many preceding narratives. It has been judged by some competent critics to be the most beautiful book which has ever been written ; and to mention some of its characteristics is to suggest that this high praise is not exaggerated. It prefaces the biography with the exquisite

idyll of the Infancy, which must have come from the stores of the mother's heart; it describes a mission of seventy disciples, parallel to that of the twelve, which rests on the ancient notion that the human race consisted of seventy peoples; to it we owe the parables of the Good Samaritan and of the Prodigal Son; and it concludes with that walk to Emmaus, in which the risen Christ offered Himself as the key to the Old Testament writings.

4. *John.* The Fourth Gospel stands quite apart. It is written in another style, and the Lord's speeches are of the same colour and tone as the author's own writing. It looks back on the story from a distance, and takes a wider range, for the Lord's life does not begin with His birth, but with God in the beginning of things; it shows the disciples immediately recognising the Messiah, and John the Baptist pointing to Him as the Lamb of God who takes away sin. It puts in the forefront of the ministry, through the story of Nicodemus, the way in which the soul is born again of the Spirit by a personal faith in the uplifted Lord. It presents Christ under marvellous symbols, the bread of life, the fountain of waters, the door of the sheepfold, the good shepherd, the vine and

the branches. It expands the account of the Last Supper into a marvellous discourse, and no less marvellous prayer, in which the personal ministry of the Lord blends with the perpetual ministry of the Holy Spirit. And as it begins with the call of the disciples, so it ends with personal injunctions to them after the resurrection. Lastly we have the statement, that if all had been written the world could not have contained the books, a reminder that the life of Christ is an infinite quantity and an inexhaustible storehouse, justifying the believer's expectation that with Him are "freely given all things."

"Through life and death, in sorrow and in sinning,
Christ will suffice me, for He has sufficed;
Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,
Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ."

It will be seen, then, that the narrative, though fourfold, is yet one; it is repeated from different points of view and in a progressive order. First the stress is to be laid upon the teaching of Jesus, especially upon His moral law, while the events of His life and of His death are overshadowed by the glory and power of His doctrine; but when that impression has been made, the stress is to be

laid on the works which filled His life, that we may see how they too constitute a doctrine which supplements the other. Then the whole story is to be told again, in order to bring out its application not to the Jew only, but to mankind, not to an age only, but to all time, the writer of this narrative running on into the Acts of the Apostles, and becoming the companion and exponent of St. Paul. Finally the stress has to be laid on the personal relation between the soul and Christ, and the narrative has to be re-written and re-cast, to bring out much which, not understood when the events happened, had become the most salient features of the life in the light of Christian experience.

The four Gospels, then, are not to be divided or transposed or harmonised; for devotional purposes we are to read them systematically and continually through from beginning to end, from the Sermon on the Mount to the last colloquy by the Galilean sea, always turning back again from the Gospel which speaks of regeneration by faith, to that moral ideal of the Sermon on the Mount, which can only be realised by personal faith in Christ.

Now if you will take a section of this life as your daily portion, to make it your own

by meditative prayer and assimilation, and in this way eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, that you may live by Him, it will be well to approach the spiritual meal with some such thoughts as these : " I take up this life of my Lord in order that I may learn of Him ; I desire to hear His words, which are spirit and life, and to shape my conduct and to form my character by them. I would mark His footprints, and in them plant my own ; and as it is said that King Wencislaus, going one winter night to his devotions at a distant shrine over snow and jagged ice, encouraged his murmuring servant Podavivus to put his feet in the track which he had marked and made easier with his own bleeding feet, so I would take heart to follow where my Lord has gone before, to do what He has done, to bear what he has borne. And further, in this way I would come into habitual communion with Him, and find Him my companion as well as my Lord, my Friend as well as my Master. I would not be content until I have understood every stroke and tone of His life, and learnt to apply it all to my own, and to the life of the world. John Stuart Mill, who, born in the heart of Christendom, was yet brought up entirely outside the Chris-

tian faith, as a moral philosopher reached the conclusion, that no practical guide of conduct was likely to lead to a better life, than to consider always whether what we are doing would win the approbation of Jesus of Nazareth. And I would so communicate with Him in the records of His life, and so meditate on all its minuter meanings, that I may become increasingly able to know what things He would approve, more eager to do them, and, strengthened by vital contact with Him, more ready to carry my obedience to those lengths which, impossible to me, were possible to Him, and by Him may be made possible to me. With this thought and purpose in my mind I would read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest this portion for to-day, expecting another portion for to-morrow, and determined day by day to live by Him, until I shall sit down with Him in the kingdom of His Father, and feast for ever at that banquet which I have thus learnt to relish here."

Before we take some of these portions, to treat as examples of the method which we would adopt throughout, let us bring into a clear picture the main characteristics of the life which we would study in detail, in order to assimilate it, and which we would realise

as a whole, in order that the desire to follow it may burn with an ever brightening flame.

We are so familiar with the story that we seldom notice its significance; like the sun in the heavens it sheds warmth and light over the world, and we are content to abide in its radiance, but we take it for granted, like the sun, and examine it no more closely than the multitude examine the solar disc.

But if we could approach the Gospel story with fresh eyes, and receive at one impact the impression which it is calculated to make, there are certain features of the life which would inevitably fill us with wonder and admiration. Some of these we will enumerate:—

1. Here is a portrait of a Being who is so unique, that His personality cannot but be striking, and yet He is totally free from egotism. The most wonderful Self that occurs among the sons of men is yet selfless. That Self is inevitably unfolded by the words which fall from His lips, and by the actions in which He is engaged, but there is no self-assertion. The claims which are involved in His nature, His character, and His teaching, quietly establish themselves like the light of a growing day; they silently climb the heavens like the sun, but they never obtrude

themselves. We behold a mind indued with extraordinary powers, overflowing with intuitive wisdom, rich in teaching which seems to be its own authority ; and yet this mind has no curiosity about itself, and is never anxious to do more than hint at its peculiar endowments. There is never a trace of the pompous self-confidence which seems inevitable, where a man of conscious power stands alone against the world. The humility is the great miracle, for no one beforehand could have seen how one speaking through human lips could have said to all the world, "Come unto Me," and could yet have been "meek and lowly of heart." Indeed, if we could see this extraordinary portrait of the Gospels in its true light we should discover that from it was first derived the idea of a virtue which is as familiar and admirable to us as it was strange, and hardly admirable, to the ancient world—the virtue of unselfishness. True, that virtue in a germinal form is innate in the creation ; it appears, as Prof. Drummond beautifully showed, among even the lowest forms of life, as the struggle for the life of others; but in human society and in human character it is slow to develop, hard to describe, and not easy, even theoretically, to justify. It is a flower which the earth does not readily pro-

duce; it is an exotic introduced from another world. This rare and lovely virtue, which, directly it is seen, men immediately acclaim as the one thing needful for human happiness and for an ideal society, is a transcript from the life of Christ. He manifested it, enjoined it by His example, embodied it in a precept, secured it for mankind by His Cross and Passion, and makes it possible for all men by the mysterious inworking of His Spirit.

2. But, again, the life impresses us as one of consistent beneficence. There is Christ from first to last seeking to benefit men, to teach them the truths which sweeten and beautify their lives, to heal the diseases which darken and embitter them, and incidentally to feed them with earthly food, as a symbol of a food more lasting. His whole object and reason for living and then for dying, is to seek and to save that which was lost. We are all sadly aware of the power which we call evil at work in the world, tempting individuals, corrupting society, distorting the mind and polluting the body, turning truth into error and light into darkness, casting the ugly shadow of death over the scene which was evidently meant to be one of beauty and perennial life. This evil of the world was personified as Satan and his angels, and

Christ came expressly to combat and to overthrow it. In the beautiful imagery which must be due to His own account of the events, He began His work for men by defeating the tempter in the wilderness; He hailed the progress of His work as the vision of Lucifer fallen from heaven; His life was the counteraction and destruction of the works of the devil. When death approached, that prince of the world came and found nothing in Him; by His death He broke the sinister power, and in His resurrection He shares His victory with all who believe. Thus here is a life of an unexampled beneficence, a service to man as deep and as wide as human need. It is not a beneficence of that common type which offers to the human mind counsels, and precepts, and ideals, ignoring the needs and sufferings of this present life, nor is it the beneficence with which we are still more familiar—ministering to the human body, but silent about the existence and the saving of the soul. It is a beneficence which breathes a perfect love to man in his complex nature, an unfailing pity for the sufferings of his fragile body, an unutterable yearning for the safety of his immortal soul. The wonder which must ever deepen in the mind of the student, is

how this character of saving beneficence so infinite, and to man's unaided imagination so inconceivable, has been so perfectly and so imperishably delineated within the narrow compass of the Gospels.

3. But the most striking of the features of Christ's life is that atmosphere of another world which unobtrusively but unmistakably pervades it. Consider how remarkable this is; how a wider and a higher realm is from the first brought in to explain and to redeem this transitory life. As a boy, He is conscious that He must be about the business of His heavenly Father; as a man entering on His task, He sees the heavens opened, and hears the authenticating voice so vividly, that He makes others share the vision and the message. He comes at once preaching the kingdom of heaven; He is certain that the heavenly atmosphere is already upon earth, and equally certain that it is to become more diffused and more recognised. His whole activity is directed to bringing the heavenly vision, and power to redress the wrongs, the sorrows, and the sins, of earth. His lips are seldom opened but there comes out some parable of the kingdom of heaven, or some word which breathes heavenly power and insight into the shadowed hearts of men.

And if we have attentively followed the records of the brief life, and of the portentous death, to which the stupidity and sin of men subjected this messenger from another sphere, we are not surprised to read that death was not able to hold Him, but that, breaking the bars of the tomb, He returned naturally to the heaven whence he came.

But consider for a moment, absolute unselfishness, pure and unfaltering beneficence, and the atmosphere of a holier world and of an endless life—what more do we want as an ideal of a human character? How can we wonder that this portrait has ravished the heart of the world? What can the moralist or reformer desire but that every one should become unselfish, should spend his life in works of loving service, and should bring into this else too trivial world the breath of the higher existence, and of the purer society, the pattern in the heavens, after which men should strive? If it were conceivable that the Gospels were only a figment of the imagination, that Jesus was a dream of romance, and not the central historic personage of the world, that these moral teachings had been collected and sifted from the wisdom of all ages, and that these incidents had been conceived by the genius of a mighty

poet, to illustrate the ideal conduct of men, and that the pathetic martyrdom of the Cross were a drama coined in the brain of some inspired Æschylus, or some tenderer and more graphic Dante, still this book of the Gospels would be the greatest aid to holy living, and the clearest light on human destiny that we possess; still we should say that the wise soul must con it and assimilate it, placing it above the works of the ancients, prizing it more than all the discoveries of science; for still it would be the richest book of life, in the reading of which we might learn to live nobly and to die heroically. But no one who has lived long with the Gospels, breathed their spirit, and sought to conform his life to their teaching, can remain in doubt concerning the reality of the Divine Person. The very structure, the artlessness, the blindness, the contradictions, the confusions, the gaps of the narrative, are sufficient evidence to him that he is not reading a cunningly-devised tale; each day's reading brings fuller conviction, that no imagination could have conceived, and that no pen or pencil could have drawn the portrait or the life of Jesus. Not only so, but he who paces along this wondrous way of the life of the Son of Man, making it his example and his pillar of cloud

by day, his meditation and his pillar of fire by night, is brought to a still surer conviction, for He whom he follows approaches to a more intimate intercourse—Christ is formed within, and is the clearer evidence of the Christ whose life was once lived without. Now let us take a specimen portion out of each of the four Gospels, that we may learn how every portion in succession may be used as a guide and means of devotion. We will take from Matthew the opening paragraph, from Mark the cure of the demoniac at Gerasa, from Luke the commission of the seventy, and from John the death on the cross.

1. *Matt.* i. 1–17. On this pedigree of Jesus, criticism may raise several nice and curious questions, as for instance why the genealogy in the Third Gospel differs from it, or why either writer should derive the descent of Jesus through Joseph at all, who in both these Gospels is represented as not the real, but only the putative father; but such questions may, when we are using the passage for the purpose of devotion, be left on one side. The one obvious reason for inserting a genealogy is to show in what way Jesus, whose life is to be recorded, strikes His roots into the soil of humanity. The line is here traced back only to

Abraham, because the design is to show that He came of that chosen seed. In the Third Gospel the line is traced to Adam, to remind us of His connection with the human race as a whole. But in the First Gospel, this connection with the Gentile world is not overlooked. Four women are mentioned in the genealogy, and two of them are strangers—Rahab and Ruth. And more wonderful still, three of them—Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba—are chiefly memorable for their connection with the grosser kind of sin. Though the genealogy of Joseph seems to imply that he was the father of Jesus, the evangelists Matthew and Luke, who alone give us the genealogies, are explicit in declaring the virgin birth. The names in the family tree, and the number of the generations are unimportant; the point is that He springs from the human race, and that He draws His humanity through human beings stained with the sins, and burdened with the sorrows, from which He has come to deliver them. And thus at the outset of the Gospel we are led to a heartfelt gratitude, that we sinful men and women are related to our Saviour, that He has no wish to disown the relationship, but comes to assert and accept it, and that already He enters into our suffering by being born of a woman, and

begins to bear our sins, by being the "Son of Man." With our eye on this list of names, some illustrious, some infamous, some only obscure, we may humbly venture to insert our own names in the human family to which Jesus belongs.

2. *Mark* v. 1–20. When the modern reader takes up this much-contested passage, it is difficult for him to dismiss from his mind the derisive criticisms which have been passed upon it. For nearly a generation the late Professor Huxley held it up to ridicule, as a crucial evidence that the Gospel narrative is unhistorical. And yet if you will fairly conceive the episode in its completeness, you will wonder at the frivolity and blindness of one, who could see in such a narrative merely an occasion for scientific scorn. That the herd of swine plunged down the cliff impelled by evil spirits, which were ejected from a man, and permitted to enter into them by the Healer himself, is no doubt a puzzling phenomenon to the scientific mind; but at the worst it is only a flaw in a picture of unrivalled beauty. Jesus comes across the water to a strange country, and the land is filled with the howls and lamentations of a disordered human mind, whose dwelling is among the tombs, who

is neglected and despaired of by his fellow-men. But to this newly-arrived visitor in Gerasa the sufferer is the first and supreme object of interest; by the bands of His love and pity He draws the distracted creature to His feet, and humouring the sick fancy that he was possessed by a legion of unclean spirits, He commands them to come out, and grants the petition of the sufferer that they may enter into the swine, as a wise contribution to the cure. By His authority of human sympathy and of Divine power the forlorn and distracted man is calmed and restored; clothed and in his right mind, he sits at the feet of his benefactor. What matters it that two thousand swine are sacrificed? A man is of far more value: the Son of Man is come to seek and to save every man that is lost. And yet observe the delicacy of His relation with the men whom He would save, and the unwillingness to obtrude Himself upon them before they desire Him; when the misguided people, who valued their swine and their money's worth more than the rescue of a suffering fellow-creature, besought the Healer and Saviour to leave them, He without protest returned to the boat and left the shore on which He had just landed. But

He would not take with Him the grateful creature whom He had saved, leaving him as a witness and an apostle to the Gerasenes, who had refused to receive Him. Here indeed is occasion for gratitude and hope and adoration :—Am not I a distracted spirit, dwelling among tombs? or do I not know dear fellow-creatures in that lamentable plight? Surely it is all the world to me that my Saviour and my Healer comes across the waters of Time to speak the delivering word. That He cares, that He has power, that He does not despair, is the gospel to my forlorn heart; and if, my Lord, Thou healest and restorest, then would I indeed follow Thee and return with Thee in the boat; but if Thou wouldest for a little time forbid me that vision of Thy face, I would willingly stay among the men who mistrust Thee or deny Thee, and publish to them how great things Thou hast done for me and mine. Nor would I forget to pray for those blinded souls that in their knowledge, falsely so-called, can always find a thousand petty objections against Thee, but have no eye to see Thee as Thou art, and will not come to Thee that Thou mayest give them life.

3. *Luke* x. 1–17. This portion is a great incentive to missionary effort. Not content

with sending out the twelve, who might seem to represent only the Jewish people, the Lord sends out other seventy also, who clearly represent all the nations upon earth, and not only so, but He only sends them whither He Himself intends to come, for His purpose is not to rest until He has penetrated every part of the habitable globe. The messengers are to be gentle, the sons of peace, winning their way not by force, or craft, or diplomacy, but by the beneficence of their mission, which is to heal the sick and to diffuse everywhere a heavenly atmosphere. Their only severity is to be the faithful announcement of what must result from neglecting them; they, like Christ, as Christ like God, will not force themselves upon the acceptance of mankind; but inevitably the people on whom the heavenly light has shone incur a terrible responsibility if they reject it. We are to lay the truth to heart, that when Christ is neglected or put aside, and the dust of His shoes is shaken off against us, we cannot remain in the position of those who have never heard or known, and we are to expect that the state of those in Christendom who reject Christ should be in some ways worse than the state of the heathen who never heard of Him. And yet they who receive Him become the sons of God; and the

blessings of the kingdom of heaven, even in its first proclamation, are so great that we must be eager to carry the good news to all. Our devotion can hardly proceed, unless it throbs with the desire to make known our Lord, who is its object, to every human soul. With what countenance can we worship Him, and with what words can we show our obedience, if we do not share His longing for the extension of the kingdom? And in this portion He reminds us that we may promote His object not only by going as His messengers, but also by praying that more labourers may be sent into the harvest. Here is a direction for our constant and believing prayers, and we are to grasp the thought, that to pray in the name of Jesus is to pray for the things which He desires or commands.

The prayers in His name will be answered, though the answer will be delayed till the prayers are genuinely offered; and thus the kingdom of heaven tarries, and vast multitudes of men remain in ignorance of the treasure which belongs to them, as well as to us, because we are cold and remiss and fitful in asking that men and women may be raised up in sufficient numbers to carry the gospel to all mankind.

4. *John* xix. 17–30. This portion is a section out of the fourfold story of the Lord's Passion. The story of the Passion occupies about one-fourth of the four Gospels; and by virtue of a fourfold narrative it is secured, that in the daily meditation on the life of Christ we should four times study His death, in the proportion of one to three of His earthly life. This insistence on the Cross makes its own impression and imparts its own truth. The slight variations and additions in each account add interest to the repetition, and they give the suggestion that, though Christ once suffered for all, His crucifixion has to be repeated in the endless varieties of human lives. Whenever we approach the perusal of this holy tragedy we have the twofold question to raise and answer: first, How shall I understand and apprehend this sacrifice which was offered for me, and rightly behold and receive the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world? and second, How shall I take up my cross to follow Him, and learn, from the detail and the manner of His suffering, in what way I should endure my own? He died for me that I might live, but He died for me also that I might die with Him, and so live unto God. Grant, O my Lord, that I may never handle

any incident of Thy passion, or gaze on any moment of Thy sacrifice, without at the same time receiving afresh the virtue of Thy propitiation, and offering myself again body and soul as a sacrifice to God.

In this portion from the Fourth Gospel a special stress is laid on Christ bearing His own cross, as elsewhere the touching fact is introduced, that, when He fainted beneath it, it was laid upon Simon; and so it is necessary for me to bear my own cross, and none can relieve me of it; and yet in reserve is the fact, that when I faint beneath it another will bear it for me. In this portion, again, we are told that the superscription was written in the three languages of the civilised world, and that Pilate refused to alter the august title which had been given to the Lord, perhaps in scorn. I thank Thee, O God, that this title is to be published in all languages, and that however it may be given, it will not be altered or removed till every knee shall bow at the name of Jesus, and every tongue shall call Him Lord. In this portion, too, there are three utterances on the cross which in their combination give us a wonderful insight into the heart of Jesus; that in such an hour of supreme conflict He should be able to think of the domestic comfort of

His mother, is only less pathetic than the human cry, "I thirst," which reveals the peculiar anguish of crucifixion. But from that tender last bequest, which shows how His heart clings to His human friends, and from that agonising cry of the tortured body, He quickly rises to the master-thought and the dominant feeling of that awful hour: the work He had come to do was accomplished, the good He had sought was attained, the ransom was paid, and He had opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. In that sublime conviction He died.

May it be given me by faith to have a share in that finished work, and by love and obedience may I prosecute the task which has been given me, and in my death exhibit an unselfish thought for those whom I leave behind, a patient endurance of whatever I am called to bear, and the sweet assurance, that the purpose for which my earthly life was given has been achieved.

A Prayer to be used in every Perusal of the Life of Christ.

Let Thy servant, O Lord, be exercised in Thy life; give me patience and diligence to trace out its details and to understand its

spirit. May I not lose sight of the whole in the parts, and yet let me labour unweariedly until I have made every part my own. Thou art my example, O Lord; help me to imitate Thee, and apply the instances of Thy human action to the conditions and duties of my present life. Thou art my teacher, O Lord; I would sit at Thy feet and listen to the words that proceed out of Thy mouth, until, as their beauty attracts me, so their mysteries may become plain. But Thou art my Saviour, O Lord, the Saviour of me and of mine, and of the whole world; save me and save them, I humbly beseech Thee. Grant us the experience of Thy death, that we may enter into Thy life, and so occupy us with Thy Cross that, having died unto sin, we may live unto righteousness and may pass, from the death of the body, to be with Thee that same day in Paradise. Amen.

"Jesu is in my heart, His sacred name
Is deeply carved there: but the other week
A great affliction broke the little frame,
Even all to pieces, which I went to seek:
And first I found the corner where was J,
After, where ES, and next where U was graved.
When I had got these parcels, instantly
I sat me down to spell them, and perceived
That to my broken heart He was *I ease you*,
And to my whole is JESU."

GEORGE HERBERT.

VI

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN DEVOTION

THERE is in the New Testament a fifth Life of Christ: it is the life that He lives by the Spirit in the human hearts which believe in Him. Of this life the *Acts of the Apostles* contains several instances and illustrations—*e.g.*, Stephen, Barnabas, Lydia, the jailer at Philippi, and the Roman magistrates in Cyprus and in Melita. In the Apocalypse this life is carried forward, under mystical and beautiful imagery, to a full consummation in the future which we are always to expect. But this life is written in the fullest and most personal details, in the twenty Epistles of the New Testament, and most clearly of all in the thirteen Epistles which are called Pauline. There it is possible to trace the life of Christ by the Spirit in a human being from its birth in travail to its fulness of stature.

The four Gospels furnish the form and substance of the life, nor can we imagine how it could be realised in human hearts without the picture and the materials which they contain. But, as they themselves indicate, it is the Spirit which reproduces the realisation in human hearts. The Gospels would remain unfruitful, a lovely picture in the dusky galleries of the past, but for the Spirit that, constantly quickening them into life, age after age produces their appropriate fruit in human hearts, and in human characters.

It may then truly be said that the distinctive gift of Christianity is the Holy Spirit, if only it be always remembered that the connection between Christ and the Spirit is indissoluble. This point has been well brought out by Mr. Walker in his book, *The Incarnation and the Spirit*—a book which is a stimulating companion for the devotional hour. Let us try for a moment to see this point clearly. When we survey the whole scheme of things as it presents itself to our intelligence, history and revelation and experience may suggest that the process is of this kind: the object of God is to reach a self-realisation in this world. Whether the world is, as Dr. Alfred Wallace has recently argued, the actual centre of the sidereal universe and the only possible

scene of human life, we need not attempt to determine ; it is enough that the life of this globe alone is open to our careful observation, and the practical problem for us is to realise its course and its significance. The modern mind cannot hesitate in recognising that a great evolutionary process is the only explanation of the phenomena of the world. That evolution may be described as the gradual realisation of the Divine consciousness in the life and in the affairs of man.

The Spirit of God was at work in the long physical processes by which the globe reached its present form, in the passage from the inorganic to the organic, and in the origin and fixing of species ; but though in that æonian development God was conscious of His creation, there was as yet only the preparation for His self-consciousness in the creation. That possibility reached its first stage with the appearance of man, a being that was at last in the spiritual form of God. But many ages of development, now for the most part forgotten, had to pass, and many tentative efforts in the human spirit and in religious discipline had to be made, before at last the Spirit of God attained in the fulness of time to a complete self-consciousness in humanity. That point was reached in the

historic person of Jesus Christ; there the Holy Spirit, in a perfect combination with a human life, produced a Being who knew Himself to be, and was gradually recognised by other men, as the Son of God.

At that point, then, the evolution of the world reached its first stage; the Spirit of God had entered humanity, and the Person in whom that object was achieved became by the very fact the founder of a new humanity. His life and death were of the kind that such a Being was bound to encounter, in the strain and struggle of this evolving world. It was necessary that His sinless beauty and Divine beneficence should shine out as unique in the sinful order of human lives, and it was inevitable that such a life lived in the midst of such an order should end in a tragic death. But, as in all the evolutionary process, it was death that led to life: He died by the sin of the world, but in dying He bore the sin of the world, and when He ascended again into the spiritual region from which He came, He had acquired the power of imparting the Spirit to all human lives in the future.

The human race, therefore, entered on a new stage of its development, in which the process of God's self-realisation in humanity was to be continued by means of Christ, the

Divine man, reproducing His life by the Spirit in the hearts of those who believe.

It will thus be apparent how vital and practical the questions become: What are the results of the Holy Spirit in the human heart? What is the method by which the Spirit enters and works? and what am I personally to do, that the Spirit may realise the life of Christ in me?

Our curiosity might tempt us to add a further question, namely, What is the Spirit, and what is the spiritual life? But we are reminded that such a question is unimportant because it is futile. We are unable to explain what life is, we only know that we and others live. We can give no account of consciousness, although it is the one indisputable fact that each of us possesses it. If, then, life and consciousness are insoluble mysteries, we must be prepared to accept the fact that the spiritual life and the consciousness of God in the soul, though they may become certain as life and consciousness themselves, always evade our analysis and defy our definitions.

We must therefore put aside the fruitless and unimportant questions in order to grapple resolutely with the three important and vital questions which have just been propounded.

1. First, then, what is the result of the

Spirit's presence and work in my heart? and what are the outward signs of that inward Guest and that Divine inworking?

In one passage we are told of the seven Spirits of God, and as the white light of day is broken by the prism into seven colours, so in the inner experience of the believing soul the Spirit is discerned as sevenfold; and seeking material images to express a spiritual fact, we learn to think of the Spirit as water, as oil of anointing, as fire, and as tongues of flame, as a dove, as an inward teacher, and as the wind.

The Spirit comes into the human soul in a sense of sin, and a need of pardon and reconciliation to God, with a cry of contrition and a presentation of a Saviour and the sufficiency of His work, with pardon and cleansing, and the springing of new life like birth itself; and for this reason it is symbolised by *water*. In the waters of the Jordan Jesus and the Spirit were manifested in union; and though He had no sins to confess, He entered the flood in which men's sins are washed away, in order that by that manifestation of the Spirit He might forestall a possible delusion, and show that water is but a sign; the soul must be cleansed and born again by the Spirit. Before and apart from that regeneration there may, and indeed there must, be movements and strivings

of the Spirit in the human heart, but such pre-natal movements and strivings are like the spiritual influences at work in the Old Testament and in other religions of the world. The soul, if it is wise, will never rest contented with them, but will press to that labour of regeneration where by the faith in Christ as the Saviour and propitiation for sin it is cleansed and born again, and conscious of the new germ at least of spiritual life, and of the blessedness of "him whose transgression is forgiven, and to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity."

The Spirit's work in the soul then passes on to an unceasing process of sanctifying, in which the feeling of being dedicated to God, and the knowledge of having fixed the hope on Christ, quickening the desire to be purified even as He is pure, become a constant motive to receive His graces and virtues; a softening and healing power is at work within; the wounds of old sins are closed. Humbled and yet hopeful, the soul anoints itself for a wrestle with evil appetites and corrupting passions; and perhaps presently for the oil of wrestling comes the oil of crowning, poured like Samuel's chrism on the head of the shepherd boy, in a long anticipation of what some day is to be. For these reasons the

Spirit is spoken of as *oil*, and the imparting of the Spirit as unction. And possibly, remembering that sacred and fragrant oil which was burnt in the seven-branched candlestick of the tabernacle, we may think also of that soft radiance which the Spirit sheds in the dim chambers of the soul, a light so comforting and reassuring because, as it comes from within, it cannot be quenched by the darkness which gathers without, and is never clearer than when the awful cry is on our lips of desolation and despair.

> "Out of the night that covers us,
> Black as the pit from pole to pole."

Then, the Spirit kindles within the heart a Divine enthusiasm, a fervent love, which has a quality and a range peculiar to itself; for though the mysterious yearning which runs through creation, and has obscure beginning in the very lowest organisms, must be considered as the movement of the Spirit towards a more perfect development; the spiritual love which blooms in Christ, and from Him goes out to possess human hearts, is a new creation. It is new in its quality and in its sustained and holy fervour, and for this reason the Spirit is likened to *fire*. Christ's

new commandment was that "as I have loved you, ye shall love one another"; not that love among men was new, but the new factor was that they should love *as He loved*.

The spiritual love burns hottest where the appetites and passions are most cooled, and though it takes those appetites and passions into itself and transforms them, its transformation is so complete, that love acquires a new meaning and seems almost to demand a new designation. To enumerate its qualities is to rise into poetry, as 1 Corinthians xiii. shows, and to be possessed by it is to become a poem of God's own creation. And not only is its quality distinctive, but the objects to which it is directed mark off the spiritual love from the earthly, for it is directed first to God, whom we have not seen, and then to men. It is directed to all men and is in a sense indiscriminating, for while it embraces the lovely and the lovable, its more active ardours are directed to the unloved and the unlovable, to the suffering and the sad, to the diseased and the injured, to the sinful and to the lost, so that just where the earthly love has died out, or turned into loathing, the holy flame of the Spirit's kindling leaps up as a passion to save. St. Pachomius was converted to Christianity because, when the legion

which he commanded was in straits for food, the people of the city which the army was attacking came out to feed them. "What is this," exclaimed the Roman legate, "that makes men feed their enemies?" and he learnt that it was the spiritual love kindled by the Cross of Christ. And quite recently at Niamkolo, Mr. Hemans sent some of his converts with supplies to a fierce tribe which had continually harassed them, because he learnt that their food stock had failed; and the fierce African warriors were subdued in surprise and wonder by this exhibition of the spiritual love.

Then the Spirit as a fire in the heart moves the tongue to speak, and for this reason the emblem of the *tongues of fire* is employed. A mouth and wisdom are given; the tongue reserves its powers in the long silences of a hidden communion, and then it utters things which live and burn; the word which has gathered in the depths of the soul leaps out as a fire to burn up the chaff of the world, to melt, to cleanse and to anneal, to communicate through the frailties of the human body, the love and the message of God. The Spirit controls and also impels the tongue; a holy presence is manifested by the fact that you talk much less and yet say

much more; the idle word becomes rarer, the word which is spirit and life more frequent. The speech, whether in public or private, is pungent and salted; the sacrifice of the lips is salted with fire. And the Spirit's speech is the more noticeable because the things said may be simple, familiar, and even commonplace, but they glow and live, entering not only the ears but the hearts of the hearers. Then the Spirit comes brooding over the soul to order its chaos and to comfort its sorrows, with a low plaint as over the long incubation of the soul's hopes, and yet with reassurance which encourages holy purposes, and stills the fretful perturbations which hinder spiritual growth. And for this reason, no doubt, the Spirit comes in the form of a *dove;*

> "Felt art Thou, and relieving tears
> Fall, nourishing our young resolves;
> Felt art Thou, and our icy fears
> The sunny smile of love dissolves."

Tears are not yet banished, nor are we come where God wipes them away from all eyes; there is a travailing and anguish, as the creation labours on towards the manifestation of the sons of God; and the nascent sons of God must still share that travail. But the

Spirit changes the tears into tenderness, and the anguish into the hope and joy of birth; as Comforter or Paraclete, the Advocate summoned to the soul's defence, when it stands solitary and condemned at the tribunal of the world, the Spirit murmurs always of acquittal and absolution, and has this supreme power, that it links the present evil day to a coming glory, and enables the soul to endure its trial, by annihilating the interval of years. This dove, when the waters are out, brings an olive branch direct from heaven, and offers it to the soul in the security, but the imprisonment, of the ark.

Then the Spirit teaches, and, like a true teacher, teaches by sharing the labour of learning—the teacher takes his place within and holds the pupil's restless hand, until the wandering attention is fixed. Then come the lessons, graded according to the pupil's understanding; much is brought into remembrance, much that is new is imparted. The things of Christ are unfolded and applied, what was obscure becomes clearer, even the future is opened out, and the teaching obviously extends into Eternity. The *Teacher* teaches the pupil to pray, praying with him, in groanings which cannot be uttered, showing by example what things

should be prayed for ; thus the toil of the learning is relieved, and close ties are formed between pupil and Teacher ; so inward and so certain is the teaching, that it serves as the test of all that is otherwise learnt, and the soul is rendered in a manner independent of all other teachers. Socrates was, he tells us, frequently warned by the inner voice which he called his " Daimonion," and because that warning voice did not forbid, he cheerfully handed himself over to death. The Spirit whom Christ gives is no less clear, but is even more particular, acting not only as a practical guide, but as the finished master of all wisdom, and as the sympathetic instructor in the ways of acquiring it.

Then the Spirit comes as the giver of spiritual gifts, which are called by St. Paul *charismata*, because they come from *charis*, which is at once the word for grace and beauty, for freedom in giving and gratitude in receiving. And because the *charismata* came with the breath of inspiration, the Spirit is likened to the *wind*. The wind blows over the flower-beds in the garden, the perfumes are wafted abroad, and the seeds are carried to the soil where they can root, but each flower emits its own scent, and each seed produces its own kind.

In the same way the wind of the Spirit confers a gift on each believing soul, which is determined by the character and capacity of the individual. The Spirit does not make all souls alike, but alike develops them all. When a soul is filled with the Spirit it becomes most itself, and is least to be confused with any other. The *charismata* are as varied as human beings are ; if all mankind were filled with the Spirit they would indeed be one, as the Spirit is one, and rising out of the valley of dry bones, they would stand up as a unified and glorified host, but each individual would have a distinct character, and a peculiar gift, so that it would at once be seen, how no single person could be missed from the host without loss, how the Spirit had designed to fill all mankind, and how one human soul refusing the Spirit leaves a gap which can be filled by no other. "Blow, breath of God, and breathe upon this host, that it may live."

2. Having understood what is meant by the sevenfold Spirit, and what effect is produced in those who receive the Spirit, we have now to raise the question *how the Spirit is received*, and to consider whether the transformation or new birth, which has just been described, is open to all men or, like the gifts

of genius and the favours of fortune, reserved for a chosen few. When the manner of receiving the Spirit unfolds itself, its simplicity and naturalness will speedily assure us that, just as the light of heaven, or the water, or the wind, is presented freely to all mankind, so that of which these are but symbols is the freest and most accessible gift of God. If any human beings are precluded from it, the blame must lie at the door of those who, having the gift and knowing how it is communicated, have neglected to make known to their fellow-men the facts and the message and the power, by means of which they have received it.

Now we should do well to consider three stages, which are to be discerned in the process of being filled with the Spirit, namely, Reception, Renewal, and Increase.

First, as to *Reception.*

Christ and the Spirit are so little to be separated, that to truly receive Christ is to receive the Spirit ; and yet it is necessary to distinguish between the two, because it is only by consciously receiving the Spirit that we can truly receive Christ. If sometimes in the Acts we read of persons who had heard of Christ, and received His baptism, and yet were strangers to the Spirit, we are to understand that merely

intellectual acceptance of certain statements about Christ and that external performance of an outward rite which are still too often in Christendom mistaken for Christian faith. But the true faith in Christ, the personal outgoing of the soul to Christ, the conviction that He has borne its sins, the trust in Him as its Saviour, and the consequent love—and this alone is the faith which constitutes the new birth—is actually the work of the Spirit, and the proof of the Spirit's presence. But when this act of saving faith is done, and when you venture to believe that you are born again of the Spirit, recognising, however faintly, the inner witness that you are a child of God, it is necessary that you should, by the same act of faith, receive the Spirit, which is Christ's peculiar gift. He gives, but the gift is not a gift till you receive it.

To receive is to put out a hand and take, and to bring back the hand with the gift into the bosom. It is a very simple act, but none the less it is necessary ; to breathe in the air is simple, yet not to breathe it in is to die.

If through ignorance or carelessness that first step of faith in Christ was taken without the accompanying act of receiving the Spirit, it is necessary to come to an issue again. Here and now repeat the act of faith in your

Lord and Saviour, that you may perform the act of receiving the Spirit, and may begin again the Christian life with the new persuasion that, having begun in the Spirit, you are now to walk by the Spirit. By the Spirit alone that which has been begun can be perfected. As surely as Christ and His redemption are presented to a human soul, and as surely as the soul can believe and receive the pardon, the cleansing, and the new life, so surely is the Spirit, presented to this redeemed soul, the free gift of Christ, always more eagerly offered than it is received, to work out that inward spiritual reproduction of the Lord's own life, which begins with the Cross, and with the open tomb, and is to end with the heavenly welcome and the victorious crown.

Secondly, as to the *Renewal.*

The mistake into which we are liable to fall, is that of thinking that the reception of the Spirit is a single act, done perhaps in some moment of emotional excitement; whereas in reality it is a continuous act, which by regular performance becomes a settled habit. Our Lord chose as His illustration of it the supply of food which a father gives to his hungry children. If, therefore, we would grasp the secret of the

spiritual life, we must seek for the Spirit in the very words of our daily prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread." Or another illustration is furnished by the literal meaning of the word "spirit" in every language, which is breath; as the lungs inhale the air, and sometimes for their cleansing or renewal may take long deep breaths consciously, but for the most part breathe gently and automatically, so the condition to be attained, is the constant daily or even hourly inspiration, which comes from dwelling continually on the work, and the word, and the Person, of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And the reason for this constant activity in reception becomes plain from another consideration: the Spirit is delicate and shy in dealing with the human soul, like a guest who will not forestall an invitation or outstay his welcome. Glad to remain while the soul entreats, He is apt to withdraw if the soul grows cold, or is too occupied to entertain her Guest. We are able to grieve the Spirit by harbouring thoughts and passions and purposes which do not comport with so Divine a presence, or by the negligence and carelessness which allow the dwelling to become unsuitable to Him. And though the Spirit be a fire which lights and warms the

whole universe, yet in any human heart this flame is easily quenched, because it will not burn where it is not desired. And though the Spirit be a force so irresistible as to hold planets in their orbits, and suns in their appointed places, this force can be resisted by the human will, because if the will were not able to resist it, its yielding to it would be without moral significance, and therefore not yet spiritual.

It should be realised, therefore, that the commands to receive, or to be filled with the Spirit, are, generally speaking, not in the aorist, but in the present tense; that is to say, though sometimes a definite act of reception or of infilling is commanded, the usual commandment indicates rather "Be always receiving," or "Be continually filled." And it is through not observing the significance of this present tense that many, after a momentary experience of the Spirit's life and power, have lapsed into the lower life and charged God foolishly. Having begun in the Spirit they continue in the flesh; having once received the Spirit, they suffer the power to withdraw, and admit a doubt of its reality, because they neglected to seek its continuance.

Thirdly, as to the *Increase.*

But when the soul is filled with the Spirit,

when the thoughts are brought into subjection to Christ, when the passions are under control, and the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, when even the body is transfigured by the indwelling Presence, remember that no limit is reached, and that you have not yet attained, for in the individual soul, as in the universe itself, "of the increase of His kingdom there is no end." If the Spirit fills you, the immediate effect is an expansion of capacity and a revelation of new possibilities; you begin to apprehend how your faculties might be extended, how memory might be more retentive, the understanding more vigorous, the reason more judicial, the imagination more creative; you begin to conceive what heights the affections might reach, how love might glow and burn and embrace the world, impelling you to a passion of devotion and to undreamed-of service; you even see how the very body might acquire new powers of health, in which all weakness would disappear, an activity which would enable you to do what now seems impossible, a persuasive speech which would draw human hearts to Christ. The discovery of such possibilities brings to the soul a striving of desire and the pain of growth, and yet the Spirit speaks in comfort of the

desire and the pain which the Spirit causes; the witness becomes clear that this renewed energising is Divine, and that God is engaged to carry out the expansion and development of your soul.

"Therefore to whom turn I but to Thee the ineffable Name,
Maker and Builder Thou of houses not made with hands?
What! have fear of change from Thee who art ever the same,
Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart that Thy power expands?"

We begin then to see that we are committed to an indefinite, if not an infinite progress. Always before us is the fulness of the measure of the stature of Christ; there is no end, and there need be no pause. The Spirit which works within is the Spirit which informs the boundless stellar universe and inhabits eternity. If that Spirit dwells in me there is for me no bound short of the universe, and no limit to eternal duration. In the first chapter we spoke of that subliminal consciousness which may be developed in experience, but when we are filled with the Spirit our subliminal consciousness is nothing less than the consciousness of God, and our

experience could only cease or tire when it has drawn into it the being and the consciousness of the infinite God. We need not look back or halt in the present with that prospect opening in the future—

> "Call me, rather, silent voices,
> Upward through the starry track,
> To the glimmering heights beyond me,
> On and always on."

The occupation with the Person and teaching of our Lord, on which the continuous inhalation of the Spirit depends, is, as you quickly come to see, the guarantee of this eternal development, for "we, reflecting as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. iii. 18).

3. The question remains, *By what method am I thus to receive the Spirit, the effects of which are so transporting?* And the answer should now be very clear. Granted that God is seeking in all human hearts a place for His abiding, and an instrument for His operation, and that His gift of Christ to the world is the proof of His willingness, and the way of His choosing, to fill with His Spirit every

child of man ; granting, therefore, that He besieges human hearts with the soft and silent insistence of the light or of the air, which will penetrate every chink of the shuttered room ; the soul has but one method for receiving the Divine gift. It must by meditation and desire, by supplication and faith, by thanksgiving and whatsoever else goes to constitute prayer, throw open, and constantly keep open, its windows to the Divine light and air. The life of devotion is the only method ; it is as natural as it is obvious, and as necessary as those physical exercises by which we receive the light of day, the fresh air, the meat and drink, the ablutions, the medicines and all the alleviations which our corporeal state requires.

And this life of sustained devotion is the witness of immortality, for if while these earthly faculties survive we are occupied with so divine a communion, there can be no doubt that when the faculties decay the communion will be continued. And as John Eliot, the apostle to the Indians, rejoiced in his later years that, though his intellectual powers were going, his love remained, so, if we come down with sustained devotion to the bank of the dark river, it is beyond question that across the ford a path of the same

kind will lead up to the celestial city, and in the land of our desire we shall carry on to one perfection after another that life of the Spirit which we began in these frail temples of the flesh, and in the agitations of the fleeting years.

It remains only to offer some suggestions which may enable the reader to carry into practice that life of devotion which he now desires to live.

A Prayer for the Spirit.

O my God, whose greatest gift to us is the Spirit through Jesus Christ our Lord, and who desirest with yearning love to occupy these hearts and to employ these lives, grant to me, and to mine, the wisdom to remove the opposing obstacles and to suffer nothing to abide within, in company with which Thy Holy Spirit cannot dwell. Settle our eyes and our minds upon our Lord Jesus Christ, and let our faith receive from Him all that He would give—pardon and redemption which He came into the world to impart, and the gift of the Spirit which He ascended into heaven to pour down. Daily would we receive these gifts, and by the light, the power, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost, may we so live in this life

of our probation, and in this world of our transition that, when the brief journey is accomplished and we are escaped from the tabernacle of our flesh, we may live with Thee, spirit with spirit, and be like Thee because we see Thee as Thou art, for Christ's sake. Amen.

"O *King of Kings*, before whose throne
The angels bow, no gift can we
Present that is indeed our own,
Since heaven and earth belong to Thee:
Yet this our souls through grace impart,
The offering of a thankful heart.

O *Jesu*, set at God's right hand,
With Thine eternal Father plead
For all Thy loyal-hearted band,
Who still on earth Thy succour need:
For them in weakness strength provide,
And through the world their footsteps guide.

O *Holy Spirit*, fount of breath,
Whose comforts never fail nor fade,
Vouchsafe the life that knows no death,
Vouchsafe the light that knows no shade;
And grant that we through all our days
May share Thy gifts and sing Thy praise."

JOHN QUARLES.

VII

THE MANNER AND THE PLACES, THE TIMES AND THE SUBJECTS, OF PRAYER

NO one has been so precise in recommending the manner, the place and the times of prayer as William Law, and no one has so richly widened the range and enumerated the subjects as Lancelot Andrewes. To their works we do well to resort in order to correct the negligence, and widen the themes, of our devotions. But it is only fair to remember, that these great masters of devotion were placed in somewhat unusual circumstances. A bishop of James I. and a non-juror clergyman under the Hanoverian settlement had leisure and opportunity for devotional exercises such as ordinary men can hardly expect; and though they used the occasion to the best advantage, we must not urge their example to the discouragement of those who are otherwise situated. Also, for

the comfort of the busy and the overborne, we may admit that these great souls at prayer were more rigorous with themselves than God is with us; there is a contrast between them and the Scriptures, for while Daniel or the Psalmist has three stated times of prayer in the day, Law has five or six; and it is strange to turn from Andrewes' elaborate lists of petitions to the simple but inclusive prayer which Christ prescribed when His disciples said, "Lord, teach us to pray." There is a danger, therefore, lest these most serviceable writers should for ordinary human lives be too legal, too formal, too exigent, and by exalting the duties and demands of prayer give to the simple a notion that they can never hope really to pray.

Using, then, the examples and prescriptions of those who have trodden the way before us, but bringing them all to the test of our Lord and His apostles, we may seek to determine the manner, the places, the times, and the subjects of prayer, which are suitable for common persons, whose lives are crowded with toils and distractions, or whose circumstances make the refinements and luxuries of devotion impossible.

The following directions are intended for a professional man whose time and strength

are taxed to the utmost, for a working man whose labour begins early and leaves him in the evening tired out, for the lady in society who has a succession of absorbing, though perhaps trivial, engagements, or the servant girl who can command but a small portion of her time, or the boy at school whose hours are all mapped out for him, or the girl at home whose first duty is to be at the disposal of others :—

1. Now as to *the mode and place of prayer.* There are many advantages in assuming such a posture, and occupying such a place, as by long association with the practice of devotion may compose the thoughts and incline the heart to pray. No one, for example, who has tried it can doubt the effect of making it the first act of the day to stand and, raising hands and eyes, to say, "In the morning I will direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up"; nor if it is the reader's good-fortune to know some sequestered path beneath the trees, where he has shared his morning prayer or his evening praise with the birds and the innocent creatures of the wood, can he fail to recognise how the spot has become hallowed; and every return to it will be a summons to devotion.

The habit of kneeling in prayer is so well

established, that even to speak of being on the knees is almost equivalent to speaking of prayer—

"We kneel, and all around us seems to lower,
We rise, and all, the distant and the near,
Stands forth in sunny outline brave and clear;
We kneel how weak, we rise how full of power."

Again, to clasp the hands is so recognised a token of submission, that it may dispose the soul to submit when that attitude is assumed. And to shut the eyes is so necessary at times, in order to realise that the shrine which we seek and the God to whom we pray are really within, that it becomes almost an instinct for Christians to close the eyes or to cover the face as a preparation for prayer.

It is also a great aid to have some room in the house, or some place in the room, where your prayers are wont to be made, so that the room or the place would be a reminder or a reproach if the prayers were omitted, as it is an attraction and a call whenever prayer is intended.

So far we can go with William Law and be grateful for all his minute directions.

But it is very necessary to remember that

these postures and positions are not of the essence, but are only the accidents, of devotion. To treat them as essential is to fall into superstition, and to encumber the soul with accoutrements which may cease to aid it, and even become a peril. Robertson of Irvine visited a sick man who was in distress of soul because, rising in the night, he had not removed his nightcap, but prayed with his head covered. The skilful pastor silenced this morbid scruple by the wise remark, "Some, like the Christians, pray with their shoes on and their heads uncovered; others, like the Jews and Mohammedans, pray with their heads covered and their shoes off. Now, I daresay my friend, when you prayed, you had not your shoes on." "No, sir, I hadn't," eagerly exclaimed the troubled soul, and was comforted. If our piety is to be wholesome, it must learn to distinguish between essentials and accidents. The kneeling posture is not necessary; many prevailing prayers have been offered as the hurried feet were treading the crowded streets, as the body has lain stretched on a bed, or has been sitting still in a noisy company. One prevailing prayer was uttered by a man who stood and did not clasp his hands, but used them to beat his breast; and the most prevailing prayer of all was uttered

by One whose arms were extended, and whose knees were crossed, in the act of crucifixion. The eyes may be shut to pray, but they also may be open. To gaze into the deep blue of a spring sky, or over the mysterious agitation of a great city, or even into the eyes of a beloved friend or the face of a little child, may be the incitement and the aid to prayer.

Nor is the accustomed place always the best place, any more than any given place can be recommended as necessarily better than all others. I can remember moments of sweet communion in a closet, and on a mountain-top, in the darkened cabin of a ship, on roaring seas, as well as in the joyful company of the sanctuary. And not seldom the change of place has renewed the power of prayer, and when the habitual posture and the familiar closet have somewhat deadened the soul by their familiarity, another attitude and place have quickened the old devotion, and reminded one that the hindrance had lain not so much in the spirit which is ready, as in the flesh which is weak. Here, as in all other things, the truth applies,

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

The familiar postures and positions of prayer are not so much valuable for their importance to God as for the aids which they give to us, or for the testimony which they bear to others; and they are only so far to be insisted on as they maintain and quicken the devotion in ourselves, or are necessary to make the requisite confession to the world.

Once in a great school a new boy was teased for kneeling by his bed to say his prayers. "Why not say your prayers in bed?" suggested a friendly counsellor in the dormitory. "Do you say yours there?" was the question, and the hesitating answer came, "I did once." "Yes," was the new boy's valiant reply, "but I do not wish it to be 'did once' with me."

The variations of mode and place are not, therefore, to be an indulgence to ease or to cowardice, but the necessary adaptations to changed conditions, which for each person and at each time will make the prayers more real and fervent, give them a greater relish, and train the soul more effectually to offer them.

2. *Times of prayer.*

When William Law describes five or six occasions in the day, one every three hours, from six o'clock onward, and allots to each

the topic of supplication, he is undoubtedly thinking of a prolonged season of reading, meditation, and prayer. We may conclude that at King's Cliffe he spent from five to six hours a day in this occupation, and he had his reward in the triumph and radiant joy of his closing hours. But when the Psalmist, in Psalm cxix., declares that at midnight he rises to praise God, and that again he prevents the dawn or the night watches with his worship, and seven times a day renews thanksgiving, we are not perhaps to think of stated seasons of prayer, but rather of brief ejaculations which, taken altogether, might not have occupied as many minutes. Each of these two examples will render its special aid in deciding on the times of prayer which are suitable or possible for ordinary persons in the ordinary life of to-day.

The first and most essential thing is to secure each day one quiet season of not less than half an hour. It cannot be maintained that any human being, however busy, is unable to secure so brief a season of quiet, for indeed God has so made us, that the system cannot bear a strain which is never relaxed, and no one can continue to live unless there is some pause, some leisure,

some opportunity of recovery every day—and God asks us all to spend half an hour of this relaxation with Himself. At what period of the day this season is to be secured must be determined by circumstances. The best time is the earliest in the day: to see God's face before you see any other, and to be sure of His communion before entering into the world, is a great guarantee of sustained spiritual life. I knew a man who was brought to Christ out of a very fallen state. His work was as long in the day as human powers can endure; he took his season of prayer in the evening when the work was over, and he prayed, I think, with great sincerity and fervour, but he was overtaken again with sin and fell away, and I could not but think that if he had begun the day, instead of ending it, with God, he might have found power to resist the temptations with which the day was always teeming. There is a freshness in the morning hour when the body wakes from sleep, and before the rush of daily thought invades the mind, which makes prayer more vivid and more efficacious; it becomes a link between the night and the day, by which the rest of the one is transmitted into the tumult of the other. But if the half-hour cannot be obtained at

the beginning, the next best occasion is the height of the day at noon. A season of recollection in the midst of the bustle and excitement may be all the more vital because the struggle is then most intense, and the faculties are most excited. In the centres of industry all churches should be open at noon, as a cool retreat whither the eager workers may repair to refresh their souls with God, while they whose occupations are at home may, if they will, make their church in the house, and pausing in the mid-point between the hours of rest, may shut the door of their chamber, and gain a rest better even than sleep from Him, who giveth His beloved sleep, and also sustains them under the heat and burden of the day. If the noon hour is impracticable, the next best thing is to retire when the work is done in the evening, to review the day and, by God's grace, to cleanse it with prayer, and to make the hours between work and sleeping as holy and as serviceable as they can be. Or in the last resort, the prayer before sleeping must be expanded into the season of communion, and if the body is not too drowsy and the mind too jaded, there is one great advantage from a prolonged devotion at that season of the day, namely, that the thoughts

of God, petitions, and the working of the Spirit will go on during the unconsciousness of sleep, and will often make the first moment of the following day a waking into the presence of God, where there is fulness of joy.

But, if the one half-hour is scrupulously kept and used, it is likely that a desire will awaken to secure other such seasons of devotion in the course of the day, and such a desire will in most lives find opportunity of satisfaction. Some interval or corner of the day will be rescued from employment, or pleasure or indolence, an hour or a half-hour which we had hardly known to exist before; and this better use of minutes which had formerly been wasted, this reclaiming of barren corners to plant them with flowers, or to sow them with grain, is rightly called "redeeming the time." The soul, by a little contact with God, becomes athirst for Him; the season in which that sacred thirst is quenched becomes as desirable as wells in the desert; the hours of prayer in the day present themselves as oases to the weary traveller. As the labourer longs for the rest of the evening, or as the eager and enthusiastic worker longs for the congenial toil, or as the musician longs for the handling of his instrument, and the study or com-

position of a new piece, or as the lover longs for his mistress, and will find, even in a busy day, as many occasions of converse as she will allow, so the soul that has learnt by the one half-hour's communion a day the rest and the joyful labour, the music, and the love, of that intercourse with God, longs for and makes the repeated opportunity.

But even if the pressure is so great, and the circumstances are so unfavourable, that it is impossible to get more than one time of retirement in the day, the soul is not necessarily defrauded, for out of the opened fountain, streams will issue which will run beside the way, singing and freshening from morning to eve. Just as one half-hour spent over the winecups, or in impure act or thought, will pollute and devastate the day, so one half-hour spent with God will spread its sacred influence, and even in a manner extend itself, through many hours of labour, or distraction, or pain.

"Give Him thy first thoughts
So shalt thou keep
Him company all day,
And in Him sleep."

Even in the busiest day there are seasons

when the mind is, or can be, free. The toil may be so mechanical that the workman has most of his thoughts to himself, and can, if he will, recall and enforce the impressions of his devotional hour. The very monotony of toil which results from the subdivision of labour will give to working men a rare opportunity of sustained occupation with God, and of amazing spiritual growth, when they have learnt to claim their inheritance. Or there are times in the train and public vehicles, or even in the street, when the mind will be better prepared for business by being released from it, and restored to God for a few minutes. And in most cases there are such pauses and intervals between duties and engagements, that the greater part of men suffer from time hanging heavy on their hands. One of the commonest occupations is that of killing time. Would you quicken these dull hours into life, and make them flash like the wings of a bird that flies into the sunset, employ them in the recollection of the things which occupied your hour of devotion, renew the prayers, take up the praises, and consider whether, in these vacant hours, there are not golden chances of service waiting to be used.

Then it is one of the most extraordinary

faculties of the human mind, that it is able in the midst of active employment to maintain a thread or threads of sub-conscious thought, which do not stand still but work out their own conclusions—a name or a quotation which you cannot recall will, after long labour on some other subject, quietly float up into consciousness, a problem which you cannot solve, a mathematical theorem which you cannot work out, a question in practical conduct which you cannot settle, will become clear during the unconsciousness of sleep or the distraction of active business. The thing seems to settle itself and to be presented to the mind as a conclusion from another source. Psychologists now recognise that these are the workings of your own mind, though not of your consciousness, and they are able to trace the forces which, set moving by consciousness, accomplished their quiet task while their master was otherwise employed. Now these mysterious movements and instruments of the soul may be so possessed by thoughts of God, by faith in Christ, by the activities of the Spirit, and by the aspirations of prayer, that they will proceed on their way even when attention is not directed to them ; and thus it may be possible to pray without ceasing, though you sleep, engage in business,

and enjoy the delights of conversation, like any one else.

And further, there is reason to think, that these unnoticed and largely unconscious activities of the mind play the greater part in the formation of character, and in the building of the soul. What the thought is doing in those subliminal regions, largely determines what will rush into the mind when business or activity is suspended ; and the occupations of the mind in those vacant hours are for most of us even more important and decisive in developing us than the work which we are apparently doing and the things which we audibly utter.

We can now see how William Law's prescriptions may in a real though informal way be carried out even by busy people ; the silent machinery of the mind may be so set at work that it will carry out through the day, and even through the night, the devotional energies which have been imparted to it. Gradually, if we will, this machinery will so work that with an automatical regularity, as William Law would desire, you will "wake into some holy thought," and find the day already subconsciously begun with God before consciousness resumes its control.

Automatically at nine o'clock you may

reach out towards God for that complete humility which is the condition of His indwelling; the hour of noon will by its striking stir the thoughts of love and the longing for the salvation of the world; at three o'clock a habit, which has become an instinct, will bow your heart with Christ on the cross, and induce a new self-resignation into your Father's hands; at six the bell of recall will seem to ring, and you will summon yourself to account for the day which verges towards evening, and the hour of nine will seem to draw a curtain about the soul, under the protection of which it may recover contact with God before it sleeps. And through, or apart from all these particular reminders, the devotional habit may thus be made to underlie every hour of the day. Just as a strain of music may haunt us and run through every thought, an accompaniment of every motion, until, as we say, we cannot get it out of our head, so the sweet harmony of a communion with God established in Christ and maintained by the Spirit may give the time and the measure to all that we do and say; and just as a young man's heart in the springtime of an early love may be so engrossed with a girl's face, and with the desire of her love, that everything he does is done under her influence,

and his whole soul is transfigured in the doing of it, so you, whether man or woman, whether young or old, may be so suffused with the love of Christ, and so occupied with the desire of Him, that all your activity, and even all your thought, will be directly related to Him, and the times of prayer will only mark, like the milestones on the road, the way which you tread no less between them than as you pass them.

3. *The subjects of prayer.* It might perhaps be thought that the subjects for prayer may be determined day by day as the desires arise. But prayers which are the outcome of current desires soon become dry, and may even cease to be prayers; for our desires are apt to be as transitory and superficial as they are impetuous and overbearing. The deeper and more lasting needs are easily forgotten, while the chance desires of the day occupy the whole mind; one object of prayer should be that we should have the right desires, and should desire things in due proportion, according to their value in the sight of God. Left to the impulse of a momentary need, you may ask urgently for a deliverance from trouble, and forget to ask for a deliverance from sin; you may plead eagerly for those whom you love, and have no time to plead for the larger

family of God; or even for those whom you love you may request long life and health and good fortune, not remembering their deeper need of the spiritual gifts. When you read Daniel ix. you must be astonished to realise how seldom you have spent a private season in confessing our national sins; or when you read the Epistle to the Ephesians you must be struck by the difference between the requests you make for others and those heavenly desires which made the apostle bow his knee to the Lord Jesus Christ.

It will be seen, then, that much thought and care are needed in compiling and correcting the objects of prayer. Here Bishop Andrewes is of the greatest assistance, not that it is well to use his private devotions as our own, but that we should, according to his example and guided by his experience, expand and enrich our own private devotions. His discrimination of the several acts of prayer can always be studied with advantage, and enlarged as occasion may serve from other sources. Thus in all our longer seasons of devotion, or at least once a day, there should be—

1. *Meditation*—that is, a brief time of recollection in order to realise who God is and

who you are. There must be a little time to feel the wonder of His vastness and of your littleness, of His love and of your coldness, of His holiness and of your sin. There must be a little contemplation of the Lord crucified and ascended, that the miracle of Divine forgiveness may quicken contrition, and excite the passion for a complete sanctification.

2. *Prayer for grace.* Then the heart must be lifted up for the Divine help which is needed in order to pray, to learn what things to ask for, to feel the strength of desire, to gain the power of wrestling or, in a word, to receive the Holy Spirit.

3. *Confession.* It should never be forgotten that though we be cleansed we daily need that Christ should wash our feet. Though we need not open old sores, or recall the sins which God has cast behind His back, though yesterday offences were forgiven and put quite away, yet constant as the prayer for daily bread must be the cry, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." The great sins of our lives have perhaps been wept over, repented of, confessed, and forgiven, but our life is choked with the little sins that are hardly remembered - faults of motive, slurs, the omissions,

the negligences which require contrition and confession all the more because they escape all eyes but God's; and to these minor sins that text is well applied, "Take me the little foxes that destroy the vines."

The waters of a cistern were stopped, and the supply of the house failed, and yet the inflow from the main pipe had not ceased; there was no leakage, and the taps were all in order. Then a close examination showed that a drowned rat in the cistern had choked the outlet which supplied the house. The dry hearts and the barren lives are sometimes due to a similar cause; a little sin unconfessed, undiscovered, has arrested the inflow of the Divine Spirit, and brought confusion and shame and despair to a Christian soul. There is no need for morbid introspection, or for ingenious self-mortification; the hollow cry of general confession may be an offence to God; but there is need of the prompt and fearless removal of every sin, however trifling, by a frank confession and by the humble acceptance of the pardon and cleansing which Christ is willing and able immediately to give.

4. *Intercession.* Then requests have to be made for all sorts and conditions of men, for the world and for the Church, for our country

and for our own Church, for Christ's servants abroad and at home, for friends and for enemies, for relatives and connections, for classes and for individuals mentioned by name. On behalf of all these the petitions must be varied according to circumstances; blessing is to be asked on them all, but the kind of blessing is to be specified for each. The intercession will pass through all degrees of intensity, and take varied tones, from the tranquil prayer which is chiefly praise for those whose state is easy, and whose character gives us joy, to the prolonged and passionate importunity for those who are in trouble, necessity, or sin, and who seem to depend upon our prayers for their deliverance and their salvation.

5. *Thanksgiving.* It is well to keep a journal of mercies, and in every act of prayer to recollect the numerous particulars which call for praise. It is the besetting sin of some temperaments, and a frequent temptation of all, to be far more conscious of the trials than of the benefits of life. It is necessary in the very worst circumstances that God permits to recognise that these, after all, are but turbulent storms on the surface of the tranquil ocean of His unfathomable love, or moments of discipline and trial which break,

in order to strengthen, the continuity of His merciful dealings with us. And the determined attempt in prayer to recall His love in times past, the benefits with which He daily loads us, and the promises of the endless future, will silence our murmuring, turn our lamentations into praise, and give us a holy confidence in making known our requests to God.

But while Bishop Andrewes helps us in the general scheme of our prayers, and suggests innumerable details under each of the heads which have been enumerated, the actual lists and the written prayers will be much better composed by ourselves. Write down in a book of remembrance, as the experience of life leads you further and further along the ways of God, the subjects which incite to meditation, the graces which you personally need, the virtues in which you are defective, the faults which must be corrected or guarded against, the names and the circumstances of those for whom you should pray, the answers to your prayers, and the special occasions for praise. And better than any prayer-book composed by another will be one composed by yourself in the following way: When any moment of living communion with God has been granted to you,

and you have entered into an open door to find new petitions rising in your heart, and new power to express and urge them granted to you, write out at least the gist of that living prayer, stating it in such a way that you will always recall the time and the circumstances of its birth. Gradually you will find a prayer-book forming under your hand, which will be like a diary of the soul's growth, and will furnish an accumulating material of petitions and thanksgivings, better suited than any other written book except the Bible, which is as it were the diary of all souls, to revive the spirit of prayer within you, and to remind you of the things you ought to ask for.

One who will thus keep a record, however brief, of his dealings with God in the privacy of his place of prayer, will be rewarded after a few years of such a practice, by discovering that the two Bibles of the Scripture and of the universe, the life and redemption of our Lord, the constant operation of the Spirit, and the aids which come from all the masters of devotion, have led him to compose a manual of devotion for himself, which will be to him, and may be, like Bishop Andrewes' private devotions, to some others after him, a possession of priceless value.

A Prayer for the Grace of Devotion.

Most merciful Father, who hast called me to live in holy communion with Thyself, have mercy upon me, and help my infirmities. In the thronging and the agitation of this daily life I find it difficult to turn aside and to engage in this tranquil intercourse; give me a strong resolution, and so order my days that this most necessary part of my life may not be omitted or impaired. And when by Thy goodness I have entered my chamber and shut the door, do Thou who seest in secret come quickly to my help, hallow the place and the time, order my thoughts, stir my heart, and open my lips. And when, as I draw near to Thee, Thou drawest near to me, not only work in me to will and to do of Thy good pleasure, but enable me to bring into Thy presence all those who need my prayers; empty me of myself and enlarge my love. Grant Thy salvation to all mankind, and incline all Thy servants to seek without ceasing the salvation of all Thy human family. Bear with me as I mention one by one the names of those whom I would bless or help or save, and let me see them written on the palms of my Lord's hands as He intercedes before Thy throne. I praise Thee and adore Thee because Thou art willing thus to be

entreated, because Thou hast answered innumerable prayers, because Thou givest me more than I ask or think. Thanks be unto Thee that Thy tender mercies are over all Thy works, and that Thou hast compassion on us who are made in Thine image. Blessing, honour, and glory be to Thee for the unspeakable gift of Christ Jesus, with whom Thou freely givest us all things, in whom we are complete, and to whom we would for ever live. Amen.

"Of what an easy, quick access,
My blessed Lord, art Thou! how suddenly
May our requests Thine ear invade!
To show that state dislikes not easiness.
If I but lift mine eyes my suit is made;
Thou canst no more not hear than Thou canst die.

Of what supreme almighty power
Is Thy great arm which spans the East and West,
And tacks the centre to the sphere!
By it do all things live their measured hour:
We cannot ask the thing which is not there,
Blaming the shallowness of our request.

Of what immeasurable love
Art Thou possesst, who, when Thou couldst not die,
Wert fain to take our flesh and curse,
And for our sakes in person sin reprove,
That by destroying that which tied Thy purse
Thou might'st make way for liberality.

Since then these three wait on Thy throne,
Ease, power, and *love,* I value prayer so,
That, were I to leave all but one,
Wealth, fame, endowments, virtues, all should go;
I and dear prayer would together dwell,
And quickly gain, for each inch lost, an ell."

GEORGE HERBERT.

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